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REALMS OF FANTASY

COVER: Sundown *brings the vampire. Painting by Sanjulian. ABOVE: The fallen hero is attended to in the painting "Druid of Shannara," by Keith Parkinson. For more of Keith's art, see this issue's Gallery, written by Shannara's own Terry Brooks.*

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You go down to that crossroads, you just know who you're gonna find. But will he be playing guitar or gunning an engine?

Correction: The Barclay Shaw Gallery in the last issue should have included the following: © 1996 by The Kilimanjaro Corporation. All rights reserved.

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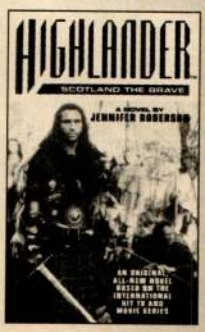
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Critical Success: Just Another Fantasy?

FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO DON'T know (and I'd wager there are quite a few, since the online service I subscribe to is fairly small), there's an ongoing bulletin board devoted exclusively to *Realms of Fantasy* on GEnie (move to page 473-1, category 15, topic 7). In it we discuss a wide range of things, many of which have little or nothing to do with the magazine, but which, despite a sometimes roundabout train of thought, often return to the subject of fantasy in general — what is it, why do we like it, and how can we improve the general public's perception of it?

Last week, for instance, we started talking about fantasy movies — which we'd seen, which we'd liked, and where the boundaries were drawn. Someone brought up *The Natural*, the utterly lovely Robert Redford baseball movie in which a player just magically has "the right stuff." It's a wonderful film, but until it was brought up in the topic I hadn't actually thought of it as a fantasy film. And no sooner had that thought crossed my mind when someone chimed in with the comment that "*The Natural* isn't a 'fantasy' movie — it's a 'baseball' movie, a well-known film subgenre which includes *Field of Dreams, Damn Yankees* and even *Angels in the Outfield.*"

There was some instant discussion about what it might be about baseball that inspires grown men and women to flights of whimsy, but then the conversation turned serious. Why is it, someone wanted to know, that if a movie is good and beloved by the critics, automatically it can't be a fantasy movie? It has to be a "baseball movie," or an "eerie love story" or a "journey of psychological discovery"?

The learned Dr. Damon Knight (I do hope I'm the first to use the honorific in print) once said that when it came to science fiction, the critics used one simple definition: If it's good, it's not science fiction. The same could be said about the fantasy genre: witness Alice Hoffman's *Practical Magic*, or Mark Helprin, or even, in a more popular-cultural vein, Anne Rice or Stephen King. No one looks at their work and says, Fantasy! Horror! Na-na-na boo-boo! But in fact they are, and if you enjoy reading this magazine you'll enjoy reading their work. In general, the cojoined fields of SF and fantasy have been grossly and unfairly overlooked in the annals of literature and film criticism. When one reads the raves being written about, say, Kim Stanley Robinson's *Green Mars* series, one would think that these books, as magnificent as they are (and they are magnificent, I assure you), are the first literate SF ever to be published, and as I'm sure Stan Robinson would gladly agree, they are far from that.

As an editor I've always felt that my job was to be sure that the fantasy and SF fields didn't try to lower the bar for themselves just because the public didn't expect much of them. As a reader and an editor, I expect a great work of fantasy and SF to live up to the standards set by great works of mainstream fiction: it must have real characters, it must have a believable plot and, most important, it must be about something. There must be an underlying reason why the author wrote the book/story and why the reader must read it. Without all three elements in play, the critics are right — it's just trash. But with all three elements, why then you can have the most incredible canvas possible — a story that wants to tell the reader something important but which is not bound by everyday constraints of time and space. What the talented author or — to get back to my original starting point — filmmaker, can do with this canvas is literally unimaginable — until they imagine it for us. And isn't that the point of books and films in the first place?

Shawna McCarthy

REALMS OF FANTASY

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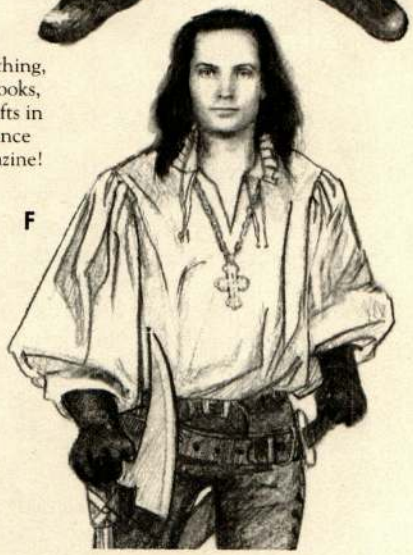
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Dear Ms. McCarthy,

Thank you for your illuminating editorial in the last issue. It certainly seems that you're overwhelmed with submissions for your magazine, but it looks like there was either a typo or a math error in the article. If you receive 5,200 stories per year and can only publish 50 of them, the odds against being published are approximately 100 to one, not 10 to one as your editorial stated. I'm hoping that the typo was in the number of submissions you get: perhaps you meant to say 520 per year? Then the odds would be 10 to one.

Hopefully,
Richard Evans
Columbia, IL

Sorry, Richard. I do in fact get 5,200 mss per year (and, sad to say, seem to have about half that many in my office at any one time). The typo was in the 10 to one figure—it should have read 100 to one.

Dear Ms. McCarthy,

Thank you, thank you, thank you for your article by Harlan Ellison in last month's issue. I absolutely worship both his and Barclay Shaw's work, and to see the two of them in one place was almost more than this poor, overworked heart of mine could stand. I'd give my right eye for a chess table like Mr. Ellison's, but since that exchange will never take place, I guess I'll have to settle for a full-color photo. (I don't suppose you want a full color photo of my right eye in return, do you?)

Christine Williams,
Denver, CO

Um, thanks, but no thanks, Christine.

Dear Shawna,

Just a quick note to beg you to please never stop buying stories from Tanith Lee. They are without exception remarkable in both plot and execution and make me jealous of her skill every time I read one. With each story you publish by her, I think she can't get better and then she does. "Death Loves Me" was her crowing achievement, however. Surely she can't top herself with that one, right?

Best,
Howard Rosenblum
San Francisco, CA

Well, just wait, Howard. With Tanith, the best is always yet to come.

Dear Ms. McCarthy,

Okay, what's the deal? Did you wake up on the wrong side of the month this issue (August)? Four out of five stories in the issue were about death-dealing seductive women. Now I like a sexy gal with a fatal streak as much as the next man, but isn't this sort of extreme? And aren't you women supposed to object to such total and blatant stereotyping?

Just asking,
John Nelson
New York, NY

You know, now that you mention it, you're right. I hadn't noticed, but with the exception of "Goldfish", every story in the August issue deals with decidedly deadly women. Wanna make something outta it, buddy?

Dear Ms. McCarthy,

Just wanted to write you a note to tell you how much I love the illustrations in your magazine. I realize that you must go to a lot of expense to illustrate the articles, but I feel they really make a difference.

In particular, I felt the August 1996 issue was especially well illustrated. The Jody Williams illustration for the article "Goldfish" was incredibly striking, as was the Todd Lockwood illustration for "Death Loves Me."

I am interested in purchasing prints, or possibly the originals of these illustrations. Where can I find them?

Sincerely,
Mark Lakbrush
Fresno, CA

We know of several companies who can sell you prints from many of the artists in our magazine. In most likelihood, they could also get you in touch with the artists themselves, if you wish to purchase the original. You'll find some of these companies and individuals selling art in the pages of this very magazine

Dear Shawna,

I read your magazine cover to cover. In fact, I even like to read the offbeat ads!

But what's the deal with all these vampire advertisements? I've always loved vampire novels, short stories, and vampire lore. Is there some resurgence in America's love of vampire tales?

Thanks,
A. Greenbeck
Vienna, VA

We're not sure, but we decided to put a vampire on this issue's cover, seeing as it's almost Halloween. Judging by the sales of the Anne Rice vampire novels, we feel the world's love of vampire folklore is as strong as ever!

Dear Ms. McCarthy:

I'm a whiner. My friends tell me so. And so does my wife.. Now, I don't whine just for sport. I only really whine when something bothers me. So, in order not to disappoint any of my friends and family, I figured I'd take a shot at your magazine.

You see, I just renewed my subscription to your magazine for $16.95. That's a little pricey, but it really never bothered me because *Realms of Fantasy* is the only place where I can find sophisticated fantasy fiction, presented in a beautiful, glossy, format. I realize that, compared to the other magazines printed in black and white on newsprint, you folks are paying big money to print the magazine on nice paper, commission artists to do original illustrations, and, of course, get the best writing talent. So, I'm willing to pay the price for a top quality fantasy magazine.

So far, so good, right? Well, not exactly. *Realms of Fantasy* only comes to my house six times per year. Most of the other fantasy and/or science fiction magazines are monthly. I feel the genre can support a monthly magazine, so what gives?

Why don't you go monthly? I'm willing to pay $33.90 (twice the current $16.95 for 6 issues price) to have *Realms of Fantasy* delivered monthly.

Thanks for listening,
John Mitchell
Pittsburgh, PA

John, I couldn't agree with you more. I also feel that the market can support a monthly title. Unfortunately, Sovereign Media, the folks who publish this magazine, aren't convinced of the need to take Realms of Fantasy *monthly. Here are some of the reasons why:*

Mark Hintz, the publisher (and circulation weenie) tells me that direct mail tests have shown Sovereign that there is price resistance to long term subscription offers. (That's business speak for when we increase the price, the number of subscription orders goes down). Further, by doubling the frequency of the magazine, it has a shorter shelf life on the newsstands, so the sales per issue would inevitably go down. And then there's always the question of whether the advertising community would support the magazine as a monthly. Add to all this the fact that the price of paper went up nearly 60% last year, and you've got a publisher that's gun shy to increase the frequency of the magazine.

So what do you folks think out there? Are you willing to pay $34.00 for a year's subscription to a monthly Realms of Fantasy *magazine? Will you newsstand readers go out of your way to pick up the magazine monthly instead of bimonthly? Either way, drop me a line with your comments.*

Your letters and comments are welcome. Make sure you mark them as letters or they're likely to get mixed in with writers' guidelines requests. Send them to: Letters to the Editor, Realms of Fantasy, P.O. Box 527, Rumson, NJ 07760. Or better yet, E-mail: s.m ccarthy@genie.geis.com.

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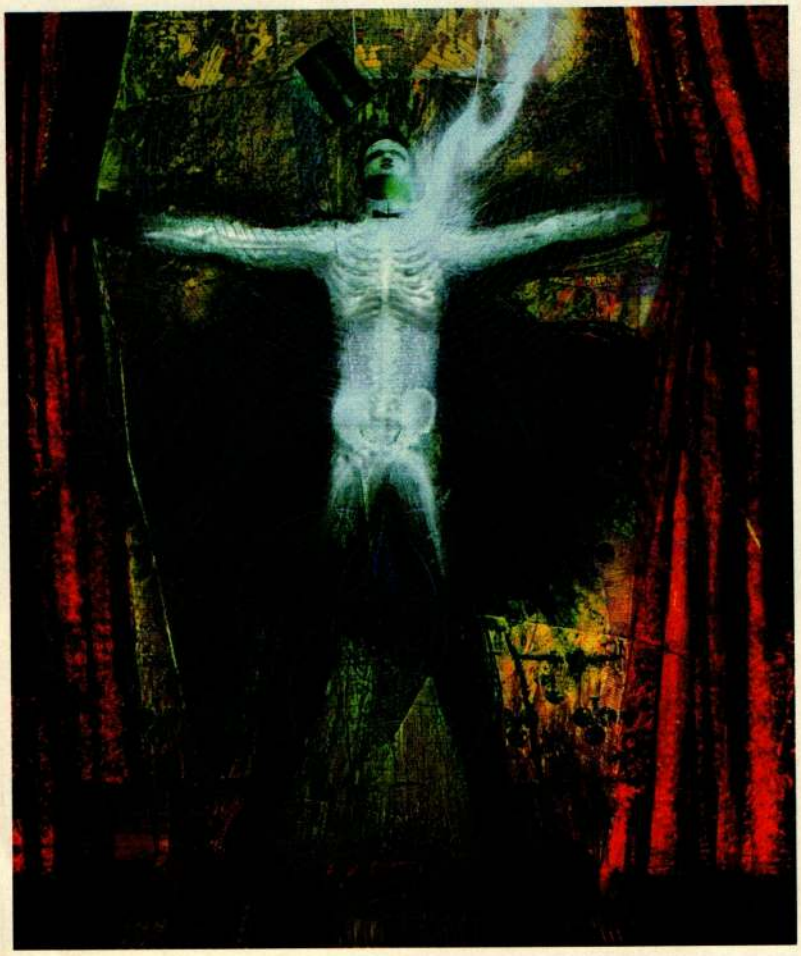
BY GAHAN WILSON

H.P. Lovecraft would probably be proud of William Browning Spencer's Resumé.

IT SEEMS A LITTLE SPOOKY, BUT I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT BY NOW THE work of Howard Phillips Lovecraft has been pastiched even more than the beloved Holmesian canon of Arthur Conan Doyle. This is in very large part because Lovecraft—motivated by a kindly innocence that looms more and more astonishing now that we live in an increasingly bottom-line era where creatures, quite understandably, clutch and protect their productions with steadily mounting desperation—actively encouraged the other writers contributing to the legendary *Weird Tales* magazine to make as much use of the monsters and evil books and haunted locations he'd created in their own tales.

HPL's generosity resulted in some of these authors — Smith, Block, and Howard leap most easily to mind — turning out really lovely mythos works, but it also encouraged a larger number of others to produce a number of noticeably less successful efforts.

Today there are whole magazines that print nothing but Lovecraftian pastiches in issue after issue, and quantities of thick, hard-backed anthologies, which likewise restrict themselves. As this mountain of Yog-Sothery continues to accumulate, the great fantasist Ted Sturgeon's law (90 percent of everything is excrement) operates perfectly and the diligent student will find him or herself reading at least the beginnings of more really bad stories than it seems fair to inflict on the sort of gentle folk who only want to keep up on blasphemously ancient entities and their doings. I suspect there must be a lot of sighings (or whatever) and shakings of heads (or whatever) going on up there in the cold wastes of Kadath.



In The Prestige, *by Christopher Priest, two dueling stage magicians give us some marvelously scary entertainment.*

Now and then, however, along comes a work that makes the botheration more than all worthwhile and fully justifies Lovecraft's faith in his fellow men and women. William Browning Spencer's *Resumé with Monsters* (White Wolf Publishing; Clarkston, GA; paperback; $5.99) is surely one of these.

Spencer's previous books have been dark enough in their hearts, but they have, as with *Zod Wallop*, tended to be disguised in bright party wrapping. *Resumé* spurns all such frippery and presents a world that is unreservedly dreary and bleak.

The hero of the novel, Philip Kenan, is a man driven throughout his miserable life by two obsessions: an absolute determination to somehow repair the horrible damage done to the relationship between himself and his beloved erstwhile girlfriend, Amelia Price, and the compulsive writing of a Lovecraftian pastiche (*Resumé* is founded on and riddled throughout with delightfully ironic jokes on itself) that has swollen into a huge novel hilariously entitled *The Despicable Quest*. Unfortunately, obsession two is a serious block to obsession one since Amelia has made it clear that there is no hope of his winning her back so long as he continues to crank out page after page of the novel.

Quotes from *The Despicable Quest* are scattered through *Resumé* and constitute the cruelest and most accurate satires of "Lovecraftian Writing" I've seen in print, and I cannot resist passing on my favorite of the samples given:

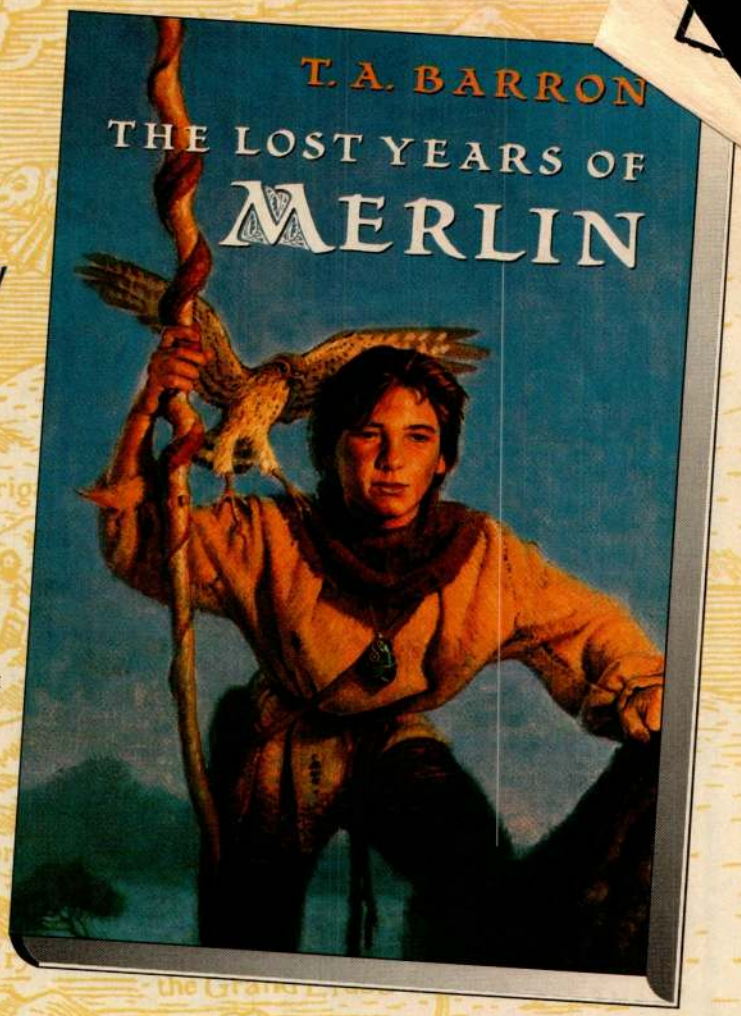
A kind of green-grayish mold dripped from the walls and covered all the furniture, like kudzu on a hillside.

Professor Rodgen swings his flashlight in a slow arc. A damp, dismal miasma choked him.

"There!" Weaver exclaimed.

Something shaped vaguely like a man sat at the gray, feathered desk. What were once hands floated upward, shielding the hollows where eyes might lie from the glare of the flashlight.

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Spat out by the sea, the boy lay on the rocks, as still as death. Even if he survived the day, he had no home. No memory. And no name.

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—Signal Journal

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"Approach no further," the creature said, each word laboriously expelled as though breaking flesh and tooth and bone in its effort to come free from the rotting body.

"If you value your sanity, professor, come no closer. We were colleagues once. I was your intellectual superior, and I outran you, and this is the prize I won."

Something in the ruined voice was familiar. Professor Rodgen, with misgivings, edged forward.

"Dr. Armitridge? Is that you?"

Philip and Amelia's problems regarding one another stem from their differing interpretations of what happened in MicroMeg, a large and typically dismal corporation located in Fairfax, Virginia. The way Philip sees it, MicroMeg got overly involved in dealings with Cthulhu and Yog Sothery and various other leading representatives of Lovecraft's pantheon of diabolic deities and, in the mad upheaval that typically follows such activities, Philip barely managed to save Amelia and himself from the resulting chaotic intrusions. The way Amelia sees it, none of the above happened.

The result of this recollectional conflict was that Philip regarded Amelia as a sufferer from a severe case of denial, and Amelia regarded Philip as such a pathetic, and possibly dangerous, nut case that she eventually fled to live in Austin, Texas with her sister and, at the start of *Resumé*, poor Philip has followed her to Austin just so he can be near enough to worship her from a short distance.

In order to survive, Philip is now working at another dismal corporation, Ralph's One-Day Resumés, which is engaged in the production of writing, designing, and printing job applications, sales folders, and other cries for help. It is soul-destroying labor.

As the plot progresses, Philip discovers, not to his great surprise, that Cthulhu and his cohorts are just as busy in Austin as they were in Fairfax and the interactions of their activities cause him to relocate more than once from job to job.

None of these jobs is of any real value to the human race, is in the slightest way satisfying, and all of them, without exception, are one way or another involved with the tireless machinations of Lovecraftian entities attempting to pervert our planet into being a comfortable environment for their evil, alien selves.

There are many marvelous portraits of people attempting to cope with the world presented in *Resumé* with varying degrees of success. The bulk of them buy into its reality; accept its rules as the only options possible; never really question its goals as presented and described by it's rulers,



but there are a few who question it and my favorite of them all is Mr. Grodinov, Philip's boss in AmMaBit, Inc., a research library of a government contractor.

Mr. Grodinov, late of Russia, a shrinking old man, gently rules his domain, the basement of AmMaBit, Inc., and passes on to Philip very wise insights in his attractively broken English. The wisest and scariest insight he gives to Philip—and one that neatly sums up the apprehensive stance of *Resume with Monsters* as a whole—is the one he gives him shortly before his death.

"You are like me, young Mr. Kenan, you think they don't come if you be very, very quiet and clever. But still they come. They smell the dream in you. They smell it and they, little tiny crappers at first—make you laugh to see them—they come."

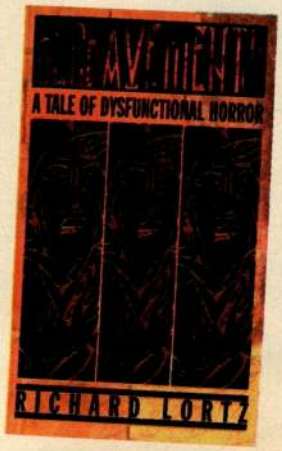
I won't tell you whether or not Philip and Amelia reunite or if they even survive all of this, but I am happy to assure you that *Resumé with Monsters* carries on the Lovecraftian tradition of despair mixed with gutsiness superbly, and ably reinforces the master's darkest, most paranoid foreboding that this world of ours is (perhaps most deservedly) fit pickings for whatever cosmic monster deigns to stop our spinning in our tiny orbit round our minor sun.

The Prestige by Christopher Priest (St. Martin's Press, NY; hardcover; 404 pp; $24.95.)

In Victorian England, "Prestige" was the word stage magicians used to describe the final effect of their tricks; the ultimate and lasting illusion that their legerdemain produced in the minds of their audiences. Two examples of a prestige would be the rabbit supernaturally materialized in an empty hat and the lady miraculously restored from being sawed in two.

A magical performance consists of two simultaneous events: one that *is* happening and one that *seems* to be happening. It is a sort of existential twin, a mirror show, a *double entendre*.

Christopher Priest's newest and perhaps best book, *The Prestige*, is a highly successful magical performance and the trickery starts with its title, since to use the word as the description of the story is to employ it as a highly sinister pun. The first meaning is the one the Victorian magicians gave it and that is explained quite early in the book; the second and much darker definition waiting does not move spookily into view until the latter part of the novel and even there it continues to redefine itself, page by page, before the reader's eyes, in increas-



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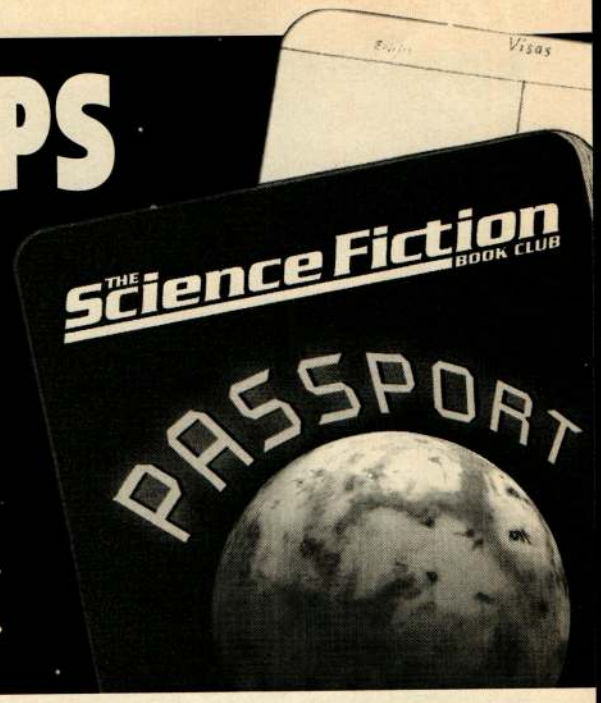
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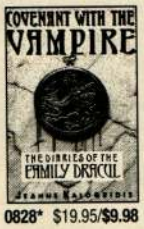
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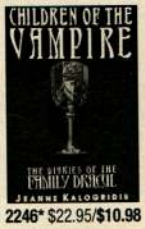
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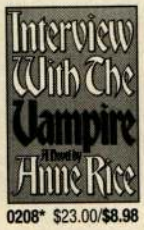
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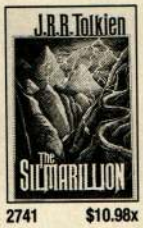
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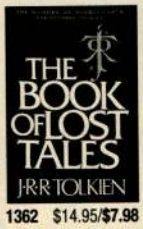
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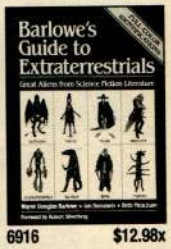
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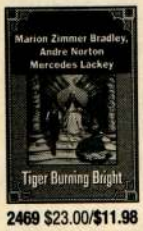
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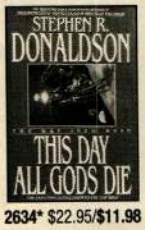
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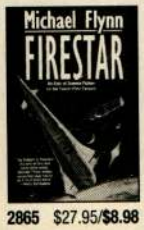
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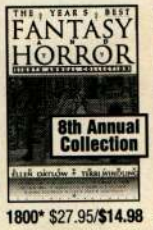
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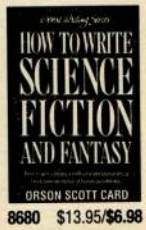
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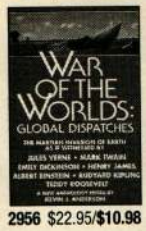
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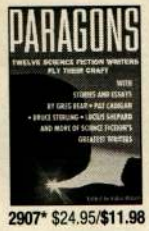
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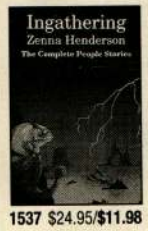
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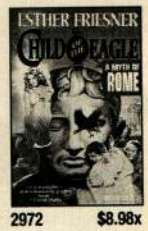
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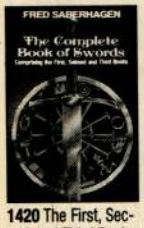
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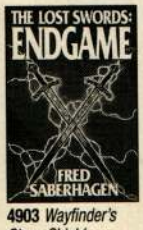
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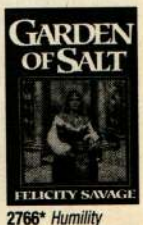
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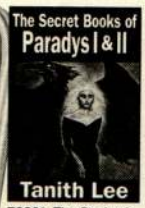
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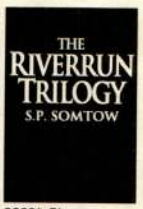
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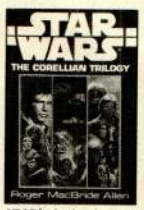
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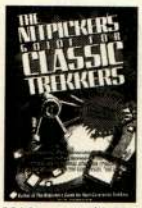
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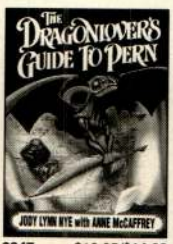
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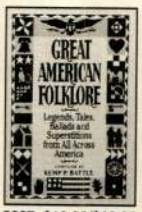
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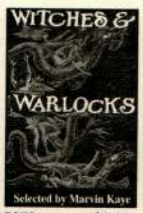
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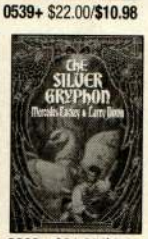
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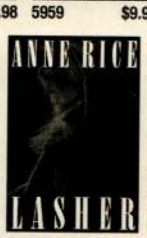
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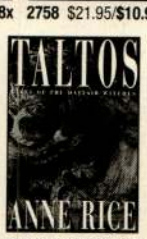
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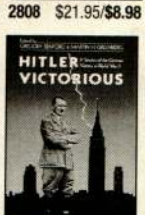
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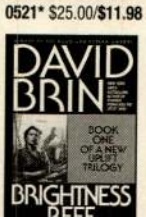
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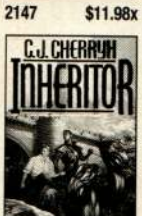
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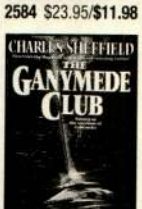
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ingly gruesome stages.

The essential story of the book is about a bitter and relentless feud between two highly successful stage magicians, Alfred Borden, stage-named "Le Professeur de la Magie," and Rupert Angier, stage-name "The Great Dalton." Borden comes from a middle-class tradesman's family and Angier comes from titled folk, though he is second born and so his elder brother gets the title and he gets naught but a stipend.

Success has been hard won for them both and they eye one another's mutually threatening triumphs with the greatest wariness as each rises higher in his show-business career. If one comes up with a crowd-pleasing marvel, the other will instantly do everything he can to match or top it, and this aspect of their lifelong contest eventually focuses on one particular prestige, a transportation illusion devised by Borden wherein the magician vanishes from one point on the stage and miraculously appears instantly upon another.

This prestige becomes such a favorite with the public that Borden features it in his posters and structures his performances so that they lead up to and climax with it. It is not bad enough that poor Angier's most determined efforts fail to come up with anything but feeble imitations of the effect, Borden continues to improve the thing and each alteration makes it more impossible to explain.

The story is told retrospectively from our present time and is revealed mainly by means of books and diaries left behind by one or another of the protagonists. This gives Priest the chance to play a whole series of tricks on us with one of the most effective slight-of-hand ploys writers have up their sleeves, namely the point-of-view maneuver. The characters, the events, and even the documents telling you about the characters and events are not at all what they seem to be. Gracefully, weirdly, almost everything alters before your eyes like objects spot-lighted in a stage-magician's agile hands. Suffice it to say that *The Prestige* is in every way a marvelously scary entertainment with one of the creepiest final revelations in recent years. Don't miss the magic show!

Bereavements by Richard Lortz, White Wolf Publishing; Clakston, GA; paperback; 349 pp; $5.99

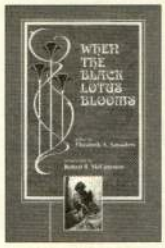
I would like to congratulate White Wolf Publishing on reissuing this book by Richard Lortz. I know nothing at all about Mr. Lortz outside of the novels of his I've read. Most of them seem to have been published in very small quantities some decades ago and all, until this new edition of *Bereavements*, appear to have completely vanished from sight.

I think *Bereavements* was a good choice for this attempted reintroduction of Lortz to the reading public. He is particularly strong on societal themes and very good at examining the weird situation which we find ourselves

Continued on page 75

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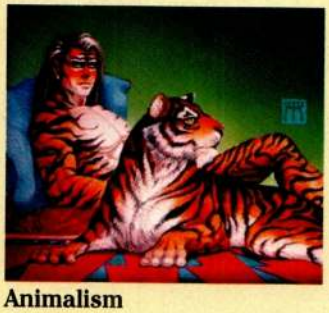


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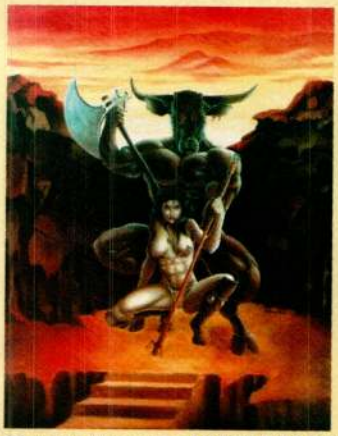


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BY DAN PEREZ

Mick Garris directs a new version of Stephen King's The Shining.

MICK GARRIS HAS A TOUGH ACT TO FOLLOW AND HE KNOWS IT. AFTER directing *Sleepwalkers*, Stephen King's first non-adaptation screenplay, Garris went on to direct the four-part ABC miniseries adapted from the book that many King fans consider his masterwork: *The Stand*. Now Garris has directed another King adaptation in miniseries format, but the catch is that this is essentially a remake, since another director had already tackled the material in 1980. The movie was *The Shining* and the director, of course, was Stanley Kubrick.

For those unfamiliar with the book or movie, *The Shining* is about a man, his wife, and their son (who has psychic powers), who agree to winter over at a snowbound resort hotel that happens to be haunted by malevolent spirits. Kubrick's adaptation, once touted as "the ultimate horror film," starred Jack Nicholson and Shelley Duvall. While it featured a number of arresting visuals (and Nicholson's memorable "Here's Johnny!" histrionics), the film was ponderous, lacked any real sense of horror (or terror — a distinction King has made in his essays) and often diverged from the plot and other elements that made up the book. The miniseries remake stars Steven Weber, Rebecca De Mornay, and Courtland Mead.

"Well, this basically came out of the success we had with *The Stand*," Garris says of the process by which *The Shining* miniseries came about. "Later on, they made *The Langoliers* and a number of Stephen King projects at ABC, and they were so happy with what happened with *The Stand*, which he had written himself, that they asked him what else he'd like to do. He wanted a shot at doing *The Shining* like the book. As well-received and famous and good a film as Kubrick made, it was Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* and not Stephen King's *The Shining*. So we wanted to do for *The Shining* what we did for *The Stand*, and make a miniseries that had the time to tell the story of the book and be as faithful as possible to it."

Garris, who got his start writing screenplays (*Hocus Pocus*, *The Fly II*, *Warlock*), first met King on the set of *Sleepwalkers*. "I managed to get that job and was directing that film, and I never met him until the day he shot his cameo, but we talked on the phone virtually every day, during revisions of the script, and I would make recommendations or he would have ideas. He was very happy with what we'd done with *Sleepwalkers*, particularly what we had done before the studio made its cuts. When *The Stand* came along, he asked me to be a part of it."

The Stand, based on King's epic novel in which survivors of a terrible plague square off into good and evil factions, featured one of the most grim opening sequences television audiences had ever witnessed. "The whole idea, even down to 'Don't Fear the Reaper,' was in the script," Garris says. "It's interesting: Each of the four parts had a very distinct personality. Part one was really the action-adventure-scare episode. It got more leisurely and spiritual in part two. And then part four again paid everything off. *The Shining* is very different in that part one is probably the slowest part, because all of the real terror and suspense happens after Jack snaps. So it's really a set up. I hope it's all fascinating and foreboding, but it takes completely opposite the tack of *The Stand*."

With *The Stand*, the scale was epic, with subplots spanning the USA from coast to coast ("I get tired just thinking about it," quips Garris), but *The Shining* is much more intimate, with a principal cast of only three characters. "They are very different and yet there are a lot of similarities. We had a lot of weather-based things. With the Rockies and the exteriors, you want to show as much as possible, because that's free — to show your surroundings. That's a lot of production value at no extra cost. However, creating



Stephen King appears in a trademark cameo as a malevolent entity in the Overlook Hotel ballroom. ABC will broadcast its version of the King classic in miniseries format.

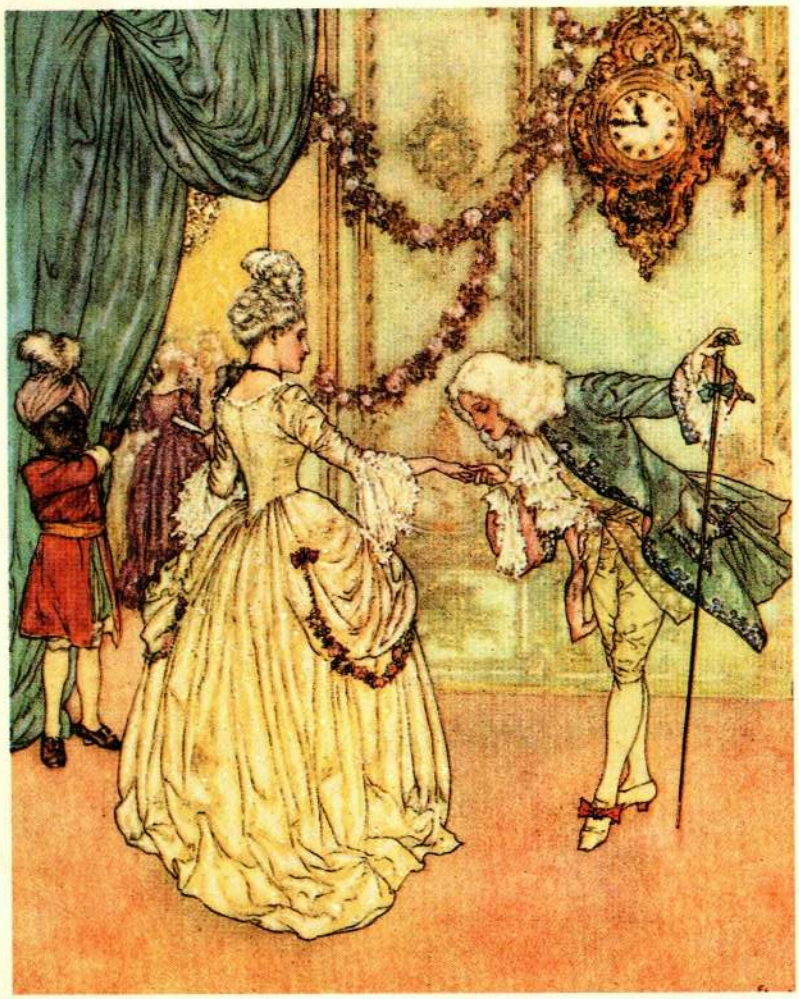

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BY TERRI WINDLING

Ashes, Blood, and the Slipper of Glass: the story of Cinderella

ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A RICH MERCHANT WHO HAD A LOVELY WIFE AND daughter. But the wife died, and in time, the merchant took a second wife. Now this woman was also fair of face, but cruel and hard inside her heart, and she had two wicked daughters whom she favored above all things. She dressed these two in silk and lace and fed them on white cake and cream. Her stepdaughter she clothed in rags and fed with scrapings from the bottom of the pot. The child became their scullery girl, and slept in the ashes of the hearth for warmth. She soon grew thin and filthy, and they called her Cinderella ...

So begins one of the most famous stories of all time, *Cinderella* (or "Arne-Thompson tale type 510A," as the folklorists note it), a tale that is found in diverse cultures all around the globe. In English-speaking lands there are few indeed who would not recognize this classic tale. We've all grown up with the wicked stepmother, the cheerless hearth, and the slipper of glass; these images have become an indelible part of our childhoods. Yet the *Cinderella* we know today is subtly altered from the Ash Girl tales handed down for at least a thousand years. Our modern *Cinderella* is a simple (and simple-minded) rags-to-riches story: the tale of a timid, passive girl whose lovely face wins her the "happy ending" of a wealthy marriage. How did the feisty Ash Girl of ages past turn into the feckless creature of the Disney film and countless modern picture books? To examine this, we must go back to the oldest written versions of the story.



Edmund Dulac, one of the most beloved fairy tale illustrators of all time, shows Cinderella at the ball.

The earliest text we know of was recorded in China in the ninth century, although the scribe, Tuan Ch'eng Shih, implies that the story is old even at this time. Yeh-hsien, the Chinese Cinderella, is described as "very intelligent, very clever," and "good at making pottery on the wheel." Her mother dies, and then her father as well, leaving her with the father's co-wife and her daughter, both of whom mistreat Yeh-hsien. Her only friend is a magical golden fish, who appears to her in the pond. The stepmother discovers this source of comfort and promptly kills the fish. Yeh-hsein recovers the bones from the dung heap, and hides them in her room. The bones are magic, and the fish continues to help her even after death, providing the food and drink and warmth that Yeh-hsien's family denies her. When the girl is left behind on festival day, the bones provide her with clothes: a cloak of kingfisher feathers and tiny golden shoes. Running home again, the girl loses a shoe. It is picked up and sold to a warlord, who begins a massive search to find the woman the tiny shoe will fit. Yeh-hsien reveals herself and becomes chief wife in the warlord's household. The stepmother and stepsister are subsequently stoned to death — but their grave, "The Tomb of the Distressed Women," becomes a local shrine.

It is not until the next century that the tale makes its written appearance in Europe. Giambattista Basile's Italian *Cat Cinderella,* published in Naples in 1634, is one of the earliest extant western versions of the story. Basile's La Gatta Cenerentola tells the tale of a rich widower and his lovely daughter, Zezolla. The widower marries a wicked woman who subsequently mistreats the child. Zezolla complains to her beloved governess, who gives the girl the following advice: "When your father leaves the house, tell your stepmother you would like one of the ragged old dresses she keeps in the big chest. She'll open the chest and say, 'Hold the lid.' While she is rum-

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come to her aid and finish the work. They do so, and the task is fulfilled, but the stepmother will not relent; she tosses two bowls of lentils into the hearth, saying, "Pick them out again within one hour." The birds come again at the Ash Girl's bidding; she fulfills her task, but to no avail.

"You're much too filthy and ragged," the stepmother says as she leaves for the ball. Undaunted, Ash Girl requests a golden dress of the tree on her mother's grave. She goes to the ball and dances with the prince, and yet conceals her identity from him (although there has been no magical injunction compelling her to do so). Twice she slips away from him despite his attempts to follow her home. Her father, oddly, makes an appearance here — he suspects her tricks and tries to catch her, acting enraged, even violent.

The third night the prince resorts to a trick of his own — he covers the stairs with pitch, and one of her silver slippers sticks fast. The prince proclaims he will marry whichever girl the tiny slipper fits. The first step-sister cannot fit the shoe, until her mother hacks off her big toe. The prince takes her away as his bride, but as they pass the grave the birds cry out: "Look! Look! There's blood in the shoe! The shoe's too small! The right bride is still at home!" Now the second step-sister tries on the shoe, and it fits — once her mother hacks off her heel. Once again the birds warn the prince he has the wrong girl, and he returns and finds Ash Girl at last. The pair are married — while on the wedding day birds peck out the stepsisters' eyes.

In *Rushen Coatie*, a Scottish version of the tale collected a hundred years ago, the dead mother comes back in the form of a cow to feed her starving child — until the suspicious stepsisters discover this and have it killed. The animal's bones retain the potent magic of the dead woman, providing the girl with clothes so that she can go to church and meet her prince (i.e., her ticket, in older societies, to life beyond the family walls.)

Fairy tales, Marina Warner has pointed out (in her brilliant study *From the Beast to the Blonde*) often reflect the particular conditions of the society in which they are told. "The absent mother," she writes, "can be read as literally that: a feature of the family before our modern era, when death in childbirth was the most common cause of female mortality, and surviving orphans would find themselves brought up by their mother's successor … . When a second wife entered the house, she often found herself and her children in competition — often for scarce resources — with the surviving offspring of the earlier marriage.

"This antipathy seethes in the plots of many *Cinderellas*, sometimes offering an overt critique of social custom. Rossini's Cinderella opera, *La Cenerentola*, shows worldly-wise indignation at his heroine's plight — in her case, at the hands of her stepfather, Don Magnifico, who plots to make himself rich by marrying off his two other daughters, ignoring Cinderella. Tremendous buffoon he might be, but he treacherously pronounces Cinderella dead when he thinks it will help advance his own interests. And when she protests, he threatens her with violence. Dowries are at issue here, as they were in Italy in Rossini's time; sisters compete for the larger share and Don Magnifico does not want to cut his wherewithal three ways. As it was gradually amassed, such *corredo* (treasure) was stored in cassoni, which were often decorated with pictures of just such stories as *Cinderella*."

The Rossini opera is unusual in casting a man in the stepparent role. This is a women's story, concerned with relationships between women: among Cinderella and her mother on the one hand, the second wife and her daughters on the other. Yet, as Carter is quick to point out, the father is "the unmoved mover, the unseen organizing principle. Without the absent father there would have been no story because there would have been no conflict." In every version of the story I have read, the father casts a remarkably blind eye over the circumstances of his household. He quickly disappears from the story both emotionally and literally. A remarkable version of the story was recorded 20 years ago in eastern Iran in which, like the Scottish version, the mother returns in the form of a cow. The story is part of a Muslim women's rite in honor of Bibi Fatimeh (the daughter of

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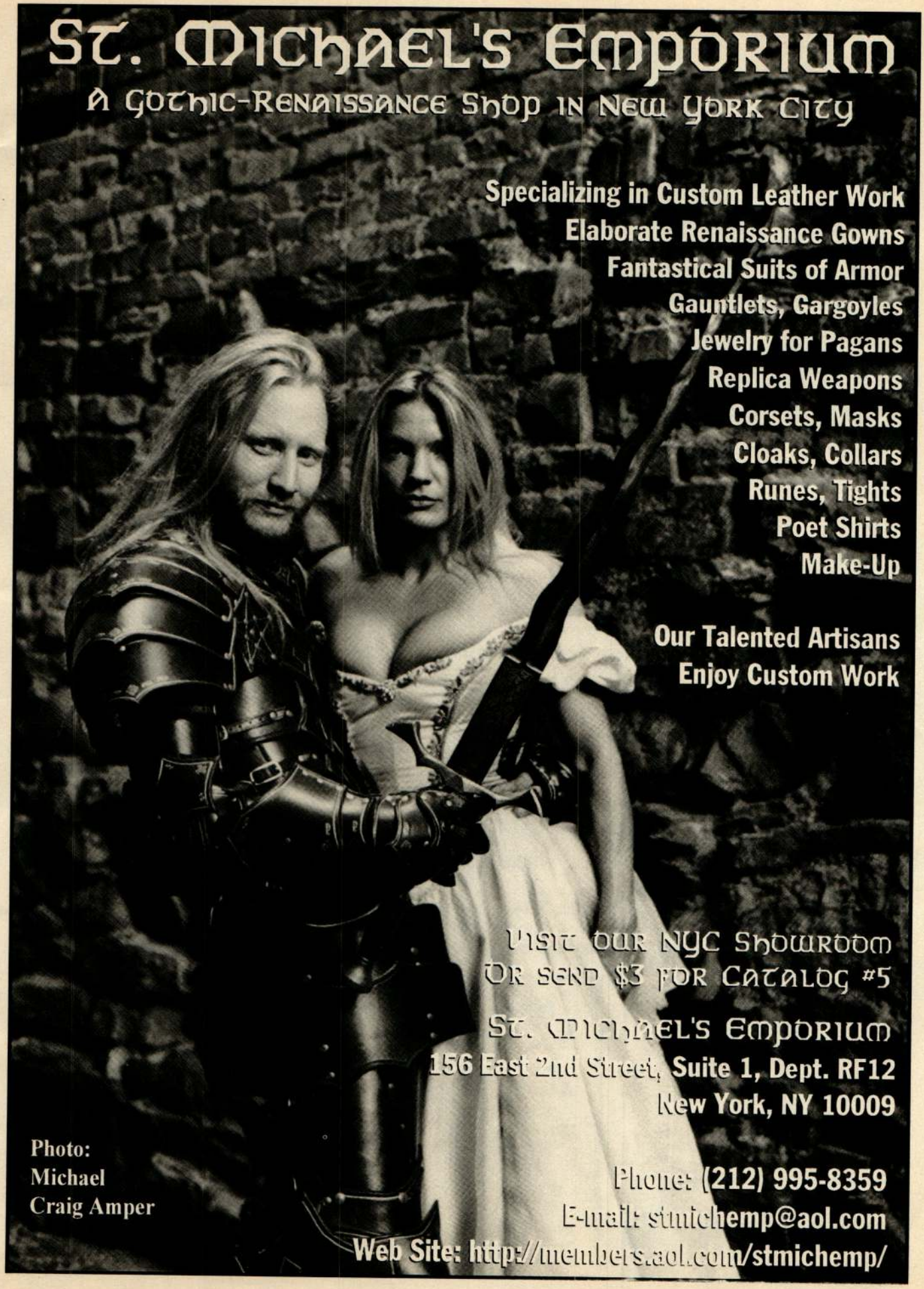
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Mohammed and wife of Ali, also known as the Lady of Wishes), in which a ritual meal is prepared in supplication for the fulfillment of a wish. The ingredients for the meal must be begged from certain households in a certain way: The begging is done by dark of night, by pairs of completely silent women whose identity remains concealed. The food is taken to the mosque. No men may be present there.

In the morning the women return and a meal is prepared of foods no men may touch: komaj, a bread of "blessed" flour; and ash, a kind of soup. A widow and a motherless virgin sit side by side in the center of the mosque, surrounded by 10 to 50 other women. The widow has a bowl of ash. The young girl has an empty bowl. As the widow spoons soup into the child's bowl, she recites "Mah Pishani," a long and lively variant of *Cinderella*. Each time the girl receives a spoonful of ash, she must answer "Yes" to affirm the tale, which is briefly thus: A rich merchant sends his daughter to religious school. A female teacher at the school convinces the girl to kill her mother in a vinegar jar, and subsequently the teacher marries the widowed father. The new wife bears a child, after which the first daughter is starved and mistreated. The original wife comes back in the form of a cow and gives aid to the girl, who proves herself to be quick-witted and good-hearted after all. The second daughter is vain and lazy and this eventually causes her downfall. The first is rewarded with a moon on her brow, a star on her chin, and a good marriage. The second is cursed with a snake on her chin and a donkey penis on her forehead. At the end of the story, the meal is consumed and the ceremony completed.

Margaret A. Mils, a folklorist who has worked extensively in Iran and Afghanistan, comments on the tale at the core of this fascinating ritual: "In this form of [*Cinderella*], as in most, the dominant relationships are [among] women: loyalty and disloyalty between mother and daughter; rivalry [among] the stepmother and her offspring and the first-born daughter. That the girl first betrays her own mother is an important element in the equation of solidarity and redemption, as is the choice of this story as part of a solidarity ritual for women, in which women join together to call on a spiritual "mother," deceased but present, in support of the desires of one or more of their members....

"The marking of the wicked daughter with a donkey's penis and a snake, in contrastive relation to the good daughter's marking with signs of radiant female beauty, the moon and star, constitutes a strong rejection of male symbols ... a direct result of her and her mother's attempted exploitation of other females, human and supernatural, and as an indirect result of her mother's antisocial competition for a male. In this tale about women told exclusively for women, acquisition of male characteristics by a female is a grotesque

punishment for disloyalty to women."

When we turn to the French *Cendrillon*, written by Charles Perrault and published in Paris in 1697, we find a version of the story that more closely resembles Cinderella as we know her today. Perrault eliminated the mother's ghost, the lentils in the hearth, the blood-drenched shoe, and added a cheery fairy godmother complete with magic wand. The pumpkin coach and the rat coachmen are original to the Perrault version. (The glass slippers have also been erroneously attributed to Perrault, but they turn up in older, non-French sources as well — which ought to end the debate about whether glass, not fur, was simply a mistranslation from the old French.) The rough edges of the older tales are smoothed and polished in Perrault's nimble hands. The Ash Girl is more clearly virtuous, and less clearly self-motivated. The sisters are no longer actively sadistic, merely vain, self-centered, and spiteful. In the end, our heroine kindly forgives them, and arranges good marriages for them too.

When fairy tales were taken up by the publishers of Victorian children's books, it is not surprising that Perrault's version was the one they most often turned to. Not only was it a kinder, gentler *Cinderella*, but it was also funny without being bawdy, filled with charming incidents, plump white mice and long-whiskered rats. It was this version Walt Disney drew upon for his animated film in 1949. This extraordinarily successful film would come to influence the way whole generations now perceive the tale — as well as influencing subsequent printed editions of *Cinderella*.

In an incisive essay first published in *Children's Literature in Education* (#8, 1977), Jane Yolen writes that the Golden Press picture book based on the Walt Disney film "set the new pattern for America's *Cinderella*. The book's text is coy and condescending. The illustrations are poor cartoons. And Cinderella herself is a disaster. She cowers as her sisters rip her homemade ball gown to shreds (not even homemade by Cinderella, but by the mice and birds). She answers her stepmother with whines and pleadings. She is a sorry excuse for a heroine, pitiable and useless. She cannot perform even a simple action to save herself, though she is warned by her friends, the mice. She does not hear them because she is 'off in a world of dreams.' Cinderella begs, she whimpers, and at last has to be rescued by — guess who — the mice!" Such editions are responsible for the helpless girl we call by the name Cinderella today; a Cinderella decried by feminists unaware of the Ash Girl's bold ancestry; a Cinderella who, Dr. Yolen points out, "is not recognized by her prince until she is magically back in her ball gown, beribboned and bejeweled."

As a result, a film like *Pretty Woman* is promoted with apparent sincerity as a modern-day *Cinderella* tale. What makes *Pretty Woman* a fairy tale? To an audience weaned

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THE NIGHT NUVA WAS BORN WAS LIKE TOO MANY other nights that autumn. The wind raged across the land shrieking like a spirit come face to face with Masau, God of Death, himself. But it was barren, as all the winds that season had been. It brought the cold, but no snow, not even a cloud to shadow the mesas. A barren, old-woman wind.

Tiyo huddled against a juniper trunk where he could keep a wary eye out for coyotes and cursed. The wind meant a miserable night and most likely his uncle's wrath the next day. Mana, fat as a cow though she was only a goat, had been restless and crying all afternoon, and Tiyo was sure she was ready to kid, goats always picking the worst weather for birthing. Her babies would have rough going in this cold. And if they died, his uncle would probably blame Tiyo, as if it were his fault that Mana had bred late and had to kid in the fall when the wind blew endlessly, sucking the life from the land.

Is a sacrifice acceptable when there seems to be no other choice? Perhaps even more so.

SCAPEGOAT

BY SUSAN J. KROUPA
Illustration by David Beck

Tiyo's eye caught a motion among the goats bedded down in the hollow. His hand tightened around his bow. But it wasn't a coyote. Mana bleated and struggled to her feet, then sank back to the ground, as if Tiyo's very fears of her kidding had brought it to pass. Grabbing his bundle of rags, he ran to her side.

Now his uncle's best goat — she usually had triplets — would probably lose her kids and maybe even her own life to the cold. If he had been closer to home, he could have sheltered her in the goat pen that sat below Second Mesa. He could have run up the twisting, rocky trail to the village on top, to his uncle's house on the plaza, and sought help. But there hadn't been any grass or forage within a day's journey of the mesa since the snows stopped coming, and it seemed that every day Tiyo took the goats farther from home.

Still, his uncle expected miracles and Tiyo wished with all his heart that he could provide one. He didn't want to see the anger twist his uncle's face or hear the words spat out like rattlesnake venom. Hear him ask, to anyone within earshot, why he had to be burdened with such a clumsy child, too young to be any use, why Tiyo's mother couldn't have raised her son before she died.

Mana heaved, breaking her water, and the first kid came sliding out. Tiyo rubbed at it furiously with a rag. Hadn't his uncle known that Tiyo's mother had had no choice, that when Masau called there was no refusal? Tiyo wiped the kid dry and felt the inside of him chill the way it always did when he thought of his mother. He had shed no tears the day he had helped carry her body to the crevice and cover it with stones, but the cold he carried within made the wind now seem warm by comparison.

A second kid followed and then a third. He dumped the bundle of rags over one while he dried the other, racing against the wind's deadly bite. Finally, they were dry. He tried to coax Mana to her feet so that the babies could nurse. But Mana wouldn't budge.

"Get up!" he said angrily. Couldn't she hear her babies crying as they shivered in the cold?

Then he saw it. Another kid, a fourth, slid to the ground, bloody and still. Dead, he thought, but instinctively he picked it up, wiped its face and blew gently into its nostrils. With a snort and a shudder, it began to breathe.

Mana struggled to her feet and nuzzled her babies, calling to them in urgent, throaty tones while they bobbed underneath her, thrusting for milk.

Tiyo held the last born in his arms. A doe, so tiny that with her long Nubian ears she looked more like a rabbit than a goat. He knew what his uncle would want. He'd want her dressed out and in a pot of boiled corn before midday.

"Puny," he'd say. "She'll only rob the milk from the strong ones."

And there was no milk to spare, Tiyo knew. Not while the Cloud People ignored their prayers and the land lay gasping for water.

The doe trembled in his arms as he fingered the handle of the knife at his side. But then she suddenly cried out and nuzzled him, and he was undone; the cry was too close to a human infant's. Releasing the knife, he rooted through the pile of rags for a clean one and rubbed her dry. He pulled away one of the other kids and gave her a turn at Mana's teat.

Finally, Mana lay down heavily and the other three kids crowded against her. Tiyo tucked the little doe inside his shirt and eased to the ground, bending over Mana and her kids to use his back as a windbreak. Suddenly tired, he forgot about coyotes and wind and even about his mother, and fell asleep.

He had shed no tears the day he had helped carry her body to the crevice and cover it with stones...

The silence woke him, the silence and the sun on his back. He sat up, stiff and disoriented, jolting the little doe awake so that she cried out in a high, plaintive voice. The other kids wormed out from under him. Mana lumbered to her feet, and the kids began competing on wobbly legs for her milk.

He put the little doe on the ground to try her legs. She was pure white and her coat glowed in the light of the rising sun. Watching her stagger about, the only white against the dull browns and greens of the desert, he named her. To the west, he could see the sacred mountains that his people called *Nuvatukya'ovi* — snow-covered peaks — but they had not been white once in the last three winters.

So he named the little doe for his heart's desire, for his people's desperate need. He called her Nuva, snow, and plotted to hide her from his uncle.

TIYO WAS SITTING BY THE GOAT PEN, A STONE AND STICK ENCLOSURE built at the base of Second Mesa, when he saw someone on top start down the trail that wound its way to the bottom. Maybe it was his uncle coming to check on the herd.

Every four days, Tiyo brought the goat herd in for a night so that the villagers could add some milk to their corn and beans. They would be adding some meat, too, this time, butchering the weak and the sick. Better in a pot of corn than in a coyote's stomach, but the winter had been hard and the weak were beginning to outnumber the strong. Another year without rain and Tiyo doubted that there would be any herd at all.

What would his grandmother have thought of that? She had started the herd from three does and a buck left behind when an Anglo family fled the reservation at the beginning of the war that emptied the world. She was only a child then, but somehow she and the goats had fought their way through the long years of sickness and starvation. *Bahana* goats, the villagers called them, because they had come from the Anglos, but his grandmother had always insisted that they were really Nubians, the best milkers of any breed. When she died, just three years ago, there were over eighty goats in the herd and the villagers had long since learned to depend upon the yogurt and cheese they produced.

Tiyo sat while Nuva slept curled beside him, her head on his leg, and watched the trail until he recognized his uncle. He must have run all the way down the mesa, for when he trotted up to Tiyo, he was panting from the exertion. "You're wanted up on top, *Rainmaker*," he said between gasps. "In the kiva."

Tiyo winced. His uncle only used that name when he was angry — an insult to Tiyo's mother and her far-flown ideas.

He jumped to his feet, rousing Nuva. "Tiyo's dog" the villagers called her because she followed Tiyo everywhere from the day of her birth. Those had been anxious times for Tiyo, the days just after Nuva's birth. He had watched for his uncle, hearing his footsteps in the rattle of every breeze. But his uncle hadn't come on the first day or the next, and while Tiyo waited, Wuuti, the old doe, delivered and lost her kid. When his uncle finally showed up, on the fourth day after Nuva's birth, Tiyo was able to pass the little doe off as Wuuti's.

"She had twins, Uncle, but only this one lived," Tiyo told him.

His uncle scowled as he watched Nuva guzzling milk from Wuuti's teat. "Early, by the size of that one," he said. "That doe's getting too old." But he had accepted the story, and Nuva had thrived on Wuuti's milk and Tiyo's love.

Now his uncle said sourly, "You'd better not take that goat into the kiva. It might end up in the chief's pot." He gave a bitter laugh and Tiyo winced, then stroked Nuva's neck.

"What does he want?" asked Tiyo.

His uncle spat into a greasewood bush, which Tiyo imagined was grateful for the moisture.

"What does anyone want these days? A way to stay here and not be dead by the end of summer. But what he wants *you* for, I don't know. I'm not sure he does. Masau should have called that old man to the underworld a long time ago."

Tiyo stared, shocked by his uncle's frankness.

"Well, I'm not going to stay here and dry up till I die," said his uncle, easing to the ground with his back to the sun. "There's got to be water somewhere. We'll just have to go find it."

"Or find the renegades instead," said Tiyo.

"Better that than starve to death." He waved a hand toward the trail. "You'd better get up there."

Tiyo started up the trail, Nuva on his heels. Near the top, a spring dribbled out into a little pool. He stopped as he always did to get a drink, cupping the water in his hands and averting his gaze, lest a water serpent catch his eye, enchant him, and carry him down to the underworld. But this time when he dipped his hand, his fingers came up muddy. The pool had shrunk to a puddle, the spring's dribble to a damp patch on the rock.

Tiyo left Nuva by the entrance of the kiva, worrying some after his uncle's talk about goats in pots, and climbed down the long ladder alone.

The chief sat at the other end of the dark, oblong room. No fire had been lit. Shivering, Tiyo crossed over to him and sat on the dirt floor beside him.

"I've come as you asked, Grandfather," said Tiyo, giving him the traditional title of respect.

The old man turned and faced him, gentle eyes in an ancient, sunken face, and said without preliminary: "Let me tell you a story."

This was the last thing Tiyo expected. The time to tell stories was during the cold moon before the winter solstice. That was when all were supposed to tread lightly on the earth and let it rest, and so the people gathered in the kiva and listened to the stories that recounted their history. But winter was loosening her grip now and the season for storytelling was over. So why one now?

We need a rainmaker to carry the transplanter jar to a living spring and fill it there with water.

"Listen!" The old man began it in the usual way, his voice almost chanting.

"A long time ago there lived a man. We have forgotten which mesa he came from."

The old man paused, the sadness in his eyes reminding Tiyo that before the war, his people had lived on all three mesas, each group with their own stories to tell. Now, the few that were left struggled together on Second Mesa, pooling their stories but often forgetting the sources.

"The man belonged to the rainmaker clan."

Tiyo's heart sank. So that was what this was about.

"The village leader came to this man and said: 'Our best spring is dying. We need a rainmaker to carry the transplanter jar to a living spring and fill it there with water. Then he must return, running the whole way without stopping, and plant the jar in our spring, so that the living water can take root and renew it.'" The old man paused.

"Yes," said Tiyo. The traditional response.

"The leader said to the man: 'You have lived a pure life for four years. Will you be that rainmaker?' The man agreed, and after many prayers and ceremonies in the kiva, he was ready to go."

"Yes," said Tiyo.

"Four days he ran, as fast as he had strength to run, until he reached the spring. He offered his *pahos* to Paloloqang, the serpent that owned the spring, and said: 'Accept these prayer feathers, O Paloloqang, and let me fill my jar, that this water might bring life to our spring at home. And send us clouds that we might have rain.'"

"Yes," chanted Tiyo.

"He stayed by the spring, resting for the journey home. On the fourth day, he prayed again to the serpent and filled the jar. Then he began to run. He knew he must make the whole journey without stopping."

"Yes," said Tiyo.

"But on the way back, the rainmaker came across some evil men. 'Look,' they cried, 'a rainmaker.' The men beat the rainmaker; they grabbed the jar and drank the water from it. Then they taunted him saying, 'We are still thirsty. If you are a rainmaker, where are the clouds? Where is the rain you are supposed to bring? Our springs are dry and we are thirsty.'"

"Yes," said Tiyo.

"The men beat the rainmaker until he fell on the ground thinking surely he would die, and his people would die, too, for he had lost the living water. He stretched out on the ground and began to pray. He begged the Cloud People to hear him; he asked the Kachina People. Finally, he called on the serpent, Paloloqang, to bring rain and save him. Even as he asked, a cloud formed above the men. It was small at first, but it quickly grew until it was dark with anger. The cloud poured its wrath upon the men, torrents of water falling from the sky, until they all washed away in the flood."

"Yes," said Tiyo.

"Except the rainmaker. He was unharmed. But how could he return to his village? The water had been lost. Sadly, he picked up the transplanter jar, expecting it to be empty, and found to his surprise that it was full. But would it still work? As he wondered, the cloud took the shape of a serpent. 'Take the water and return,' said the cloud-serpent. 'For it is my water.' Then the rainmaker took the jar and ran back to the mesa without stopping."

"Yes," said Tiyo. Beaten almost to death, but he ran back to the mesa? Where was this leading?

"There he planted the jar in the spring, and soon it had new life; it was no longer dying."

"Yes," said Tiyo. He waited for the old chief to go on. But the old man sat silent, limbs trembling.

At last, he looked intently at Tiyo. "Your mother said she belonged to the rainmaker clan."

So that was it, after all. Tiyo felt his face heat up in shame. "Everyone knows, Grandfather, that the rainmaker clan died out a long time ago. Before the *Bahanas*, way back, even before the Spanish first came to the mesas."

"There were still people of the rainmaker clan at the time of the Spanish," said the chief. "Your mother said that one of them, a young woman, was captured by the Navajos. She passed her clan line on to her daughter and her daughter's daughter, and so on, until, in the times of the *Bahanas*, the daughters of this clan rejoined the Hopi."

"I know what she *said*, Grandfather." Had she ever talked about anything else?

"Tiyo," she used to say whenever he disobeyed, "you carry

my blood, you carry my clan, the rainmaker clan passed through generations of women." And when he'd slip into her lap for a hug, she used to whisper in his ear, "It's been prophesied: I will live to see you bring rain to your people." But she hadn't seen it, she had died.

Tiyo scratched at the dirt floor of the kiva, trying to ease the anger out of his voice. "If my mother were right, why didn't my grandmother or great-grandmother claim kinship in the clan?"

"How do you know they didn't? The clan passed in secret from mother to daughter."

"All those generations? I don't think it could happen."

Another long silence. Then the old man said: "I believe your mother."

"What does it matter? If the clan somehow survived, it died when she died." Tiyo thought of his mother, bent over the grindstones or filling the green corn leaves with sweet corn pudding as she sang the old songs. Always working, even through the pain at the end, but no one seemed to remember that. Only this crazy idea that she couldn't leave alone. He felt the cold inside him grow. "She's dead," he repeated. "And the clan with her."

But the chief didn't seem to hear him. "Our best spring is dying," he said in a remote voice. "I need a rainmaker to bring it water from a healthy spring, to transplant the life back into it."

His uncle was right, thought Tiyo. The old chief was lost in dreams, unable to help his people. This time Tiyo couldn't hide his anger. "If you want to save your people, move them to a place with water. A place where the corn will grow."

"I hear your uncle's voice through your lips," the old man said. He smiled sadly. "He doesn't know how much I'd like to die before I hear of another villager's death, before I see the land thirst another day under the rainless skies, knowing my prayers have failed and my people have lost faith."

His hand grasped Tiyo's arm, and Tiyo felt its weakness as it trembled against his skin. "We will all die here if we don't get rain this season. But there is nowhere else to go. The clouds have forsaken the world, Tiyo, and the sun is drying it up. I know. I have seen it."

Had he seen it? Tiyo wondered, or had the gods abandoned the old man, leaving him only memories of the powers he once held? "If that is so, Grandfather, what is the use of a transplanter jar? All the springs will be dead."

"When I saw the vision of the dying world, I saw a spring flowing sweet and strong. The great water serpent, Paloloqang, swam there, calling to the clouds as a woman calls her lover. The spring was where the two rivers meet, the large and the small, near the bottom of the world."

Tiyo knew of it. Before the war, his people had made regular pilgrimages there. It was a hard journey, four days at least, with a treacherous descent to the bottom of the great canyon. A journey one could easily die on.

Another round of coughing racked the old man's body. "You make the choice, *Rainmaker,*" he said hoarsely. "Take the transplanter jar and fill it where the two rivers meet, or go with those who are leaving the mesa."

Tiyo sighed. What good were choices when neither of them held out any hope? Did the old man think Tiyo could make the journey alone? But the chief sat waiting, and Tiyo's skin burned from the old man's stare.

"My mother was wrong, Grandfather," Tiyo said finally. "I'm no rainmaker. But I'll do as you ask."

The clouds have forsaken the world, Tiyo, and the sun is drying it up. I know. I have seen it.

PLANTING SEASON WAS ONLY A MOON'S CYCLE AWAY BY THE TIME Tiyo was ready to leave. He had spent much of that time in the kiva, learning from the old chief how to make and bless the *pahos*, the prayer feathers that he would take to Paloloqang.

When he wasn't in the kiva, he was running, Nuva bounding beside him — up and down the mesas, over jutting rock and through the soft, gripping sand — conditioning his body for the grueling ordeal ahead.

The rest of the time, it seemed to Tiyo, was spent eating. Once news of the journey was out, a day didn't pass but several villagers would come to him, and hand him food from their own scant supply. "Take this," they would tell him. "You need to be strong for your journey. Eat so you can run fast."

He tried at first to refuse, but the chief reprimanded him. "Let them do their part," he said. "They can't run, but they can feed the runner."

Those who didn't have food gave advice — how to run so that he would not tire quickly, how to keep from falling victim to the serpent, and, most often, how to avoid the renegades.

No one that Tiyo talked to had actually seen a renegade. Some said they were *Bahana*, some said Navajo, some said Mexican. Some claimed they were all those races mixed up.

"But they speak the *Bahana* tongue," said one old man, thin and withered as last season's corn stalks. He and his wife had invited Tiyo for a bowl of stew. Tiyo sat across from them on the floor of the one-room stone house and spooned down the boiled corn as the old man talked.

"How do you know?" asked Tiyo.

"My brother saw them once, before he died. He went on one of the trips to the great river to get salt. He was hunting a rabbit in the great canyon and almost ran right into their village."

"Not a village, really," his wife offered. She had evidently heard this story many times before. "They live in the open without houses."

"But that's not all," said the man, leaning forward to make sure he had Tiyo's full attention. "While he was creeping away — now he was the rabbit — he ran past the renegades' bone pile." He paused for dramatic effect. "It was filled with human skeletons."

"*Bahanas*!" said the wife with contempt.

Tiyo heard echoes of his mother. "An evil tongue for an evil people," she would say in disgust when she caught Tiyo and his grandmother conversing in the language of the Anglos. But Tiyo's grandmother had ignored his mother and had taught him anyway. She needed, she told Tiyo, to hear the sounds of her childhood.

In spite of the stories, it wasn't the *Bahana*-tongued renegades that worried Tiyo — it was Nuva. He felt her warmth at night as she lay curled beside him and worried about what his uncle might do with her. When his uncle had first heard about Tiyo's decision to go, he had stormed up to the kiva. The shouting that had gone on between him and the chief was still moving the mouths of the old women in the village. His uncle had emerged tight-lipped with smoldering eyes, and had marched past Tiyo without a word. Tiyo thought his uncle's anger came from fears that Tiyo would get killed on the journey, but he didn't know if the anger was out of concern for his welfare or because his uncle would lose a worker. Whichever it was, since that day his uncle had only spoken to him in terse commands. What would his uncle do with Nuva? What if he moved from the mesa while Tiyo was gone and took the goat herd with him?

And so Tiyo worried, because he had no choice but to leave her. Five days before the journey was to begin, he put a leather thong around Nuva's neck and took her to his uncle, who was with the goat herd half a day's walk to the east. His uncle said nothing as they approached.

Tiyo handed him the strap. "I go into the kiva tomorrow," he said.

"Four days of fasting and prayers to the gods to save you from your own stupidity," answered his uncle, but his voice was mild.

Tiyo watched an ant crawl over his toe. "What will you do with her?" he asked, finally.

He was surprised to find himself in an embrace, his uncle's arms thrown roughly around him.

"I don't look for your return, foolish son of my foolish sister," he said gruffly, "but if you do come back, your goat will be here."

He pushed Tiyo away as abruptly as he had embraced him. "Now get to the kiva and see if you can make the Cloud People remember us."

Tiyo turned then and fled back toward the mesa, hoping with each step to escape the sound of Nuva's frantic crying. But it echoed through his mind long after he had reached the mesa and gone down into the kiva.

Then came the four days of fasting — eating no meat or salt — and the final rites and prayers needed to sanctify the journey. Tiyo attached eagle feathers to the slender sticks that he had carved, a hand's length long, and he and the chief blessed them, asking that these *pahos* would be acceptable to the serpent. The old chief taught Tiyo sacred songs, handclasps, and names, making him swear to keep them secret even at the cost of his life.

Then the chief summoned his sister, a renowned potter, to the kiva. She had been fat and jovial when Tiyo first knew her; now she showed her bones like the rest of them. But she hadn't lost her smile and she climbed down the ladder beaming, chattering, taking great care with a pot in her hand.

It was the transplanter jar. "See?" she said. "It's perfectly formed. This is a good sign." She sat on the ground and held the jar so they could view it. It wasn't very big, the size of a small muskmelon, and it was turtle-shaped — flat on the bottom so it could rest against a woman's back or a man's chest and rounded on top, with a short, narrow neck that widened slightly at the lip. A handle looped out of each side. In the center of the rounded top, she had painted a serpent, black with turquoise plumes extending out of its head, and red fire breathing from its mouth. A corn cob, cut to size, served as the stopper.

Before our people came, the serpent Paloloqang taught a young boy and girl his secret name.

"It was nearly a day's journey to get the right clay," she said, "but it was worth it."

Tiyo and the old chief thanked her warmly, and she climbed back out of the kiva, still smiling.

The old chief blessed the jar and set it carefully aside next to the *pahos*. Then he squatted beside the altar — a sand painting of the serpent that he'd created on the first day of the fast and surrounded with *pahos* and sacred clay figures. He began to sing in a voice so soft that Tiyo couldn't catch all the words, though he knew it was a song about Paloloqang. The song had many verses, but finally the old man stopped singing and sat still, almost trancelike in his concentration. After a while, Tiyo stole a glance at the bedding piled at the other end of the kiva.

"We are not done yet," said the old man.

Tiyo blushed and waited, but the silence stretched so long that if the old chief's eyes had not been open, Tiyo would have thought him asleep. His own eyes watered and begged for rest.

At last, the old chief turned to him. "Now I must teach you how to call the serpent," he said.

Tiyo blinked and suppressed a yawn. "Paloloqang?"

The old man nodded. "Long ago, before our people came up from the south, the serpent Paloloqang taught a young boy and girl his secret name. He taught them, then, the way that they should pass it on. After them, only one person was to have the power to use that name at a time, and only when death threatened was that person to pass it to another."

Suddenly, Tiyo was no longer sleepy.

"Help me up."

Tiyo lifted him to his feet and bore his weight, supporting him as the old man clasped his arms about Tiyo and whispered the name in his ear. He hugged Tiyo hard and said, still clinging to him: "There is only one place that you may ever speak this name. When you stand before the pool, place the *pahos* at the edge of the water and call Paloloqang in a low voice by his true name saying, 'I offer these *pahos* to you. Hear me please, and bring my people rain.'"

Tiyo nodded and gently set the old chief back on the dirt.

"Remember, too, don't fill the transplanter jar until after you have rested and are ready to return."

Fill it last, thought Tiyo, because once it is filled, I must run back to the dying spring without stopping, without ever putting the jar down, lest it take root in the wrong place.

The chief sighed and gestured to the bedding. "No more prayers," he said. "Now we sleep."

They would rise before dawn, and when the sun appeared on the eastern horizon, Tiyo would be on his way. He slept fitfully, dreaming of serpents and water, hearing over it all the plaintive cries of a goat.

THE CRIES WEREN'T HIS IMAGINATION. WHEN he came out of the kiva, Nuva leapt up against him as he had taught her not to do, a broken strap dangling from her neck.

"Nuva!" he scolded, and then despaired. What was he going to do with her now? He looked helplessly at the old chief.

"Can you find someone to watch her?" he asked, but the old man gaped at Nuva as if he'd never seen her before. Then, to Tiyo's astonishment, the old chief cupped her head in his hands and bent over her, stroking her face.

"It's a sign," he said, his eyes still on Nuva. "Take her."

Was the old chief crazy? Did he forget how little food Tiyo was carrying? With the *pahos* tied together and slung like a quiver over his shoulder, and the transplanter jar in a leather netting against his chest, he had room only for a few bundles of corn, his knife, and a water jar strapped on his back.

"She'll have no food or water," he said.

But the old man didn't seem to hear. He straightened up and said in a stern voice, "Take her!"

"Grandfather, she'll slow me down. She won't be able to make the journey."

The old man clutched Tiyo's arm with a ferocity that made him flinch. "Tiyo, take her. The goat will live and return with you."

Tiyo hesitated. It was foolishness to risk all their careful plans — it was craziness.

The chief's fingers dug deeper into Tiyo's arm. "Tiyo. She'll return. I *swear* it!"

How can you know enough to swear? thought Tiyo. Reluctantly, he untied the strap round Nuva's neck and called to her and then started down the trail.

So, with Nuva by his side, Tiyo ran over sand and rock, under the sun's fierce light and the deep blue of the sky, allowing the rhythm of his legs to set the pattern, leaving his mind free to wander through the dreams that ran alongside him. Sometimes he felt as if he and Nuva were running in place while the world slowly moved past them.

When they stopped to rest, Tiyo gave them each a few swallows of water, then he stretched out under the sun while Nuva ranged from bush to bush, eating as fast as she could fill her mouth.

At night, he'd lie in a wash where the sand was soft, and Nuva would lick the salt from his neck while he watched the moon — each night a little less rounded — finish its journey across the sky. Sometimes he woke late in the night, after the moon had gone, and felt the calm of the stars, so clear and so remote, while Nuva, her head on his chest, slept until the sun's first light.

Early on the fourth day, they reached the rim of the great canyon. The sight stopped Tiyo cold. Peaks and buttes rose from the bottom of the earth where the great river ran, as if a giant playing in the sand could not make up his mind where to dig. It seemed impossible that there could be a trail to the bottom, but the old chief had promised that Tiyo would find a marker. They skirted the canyon's rim until almost midday before Tiyo spotted it — stones stacked beneath an outcropping of rock that was filled with ancient carvings. Several sticks protruded from the stones, remnants of *pahos* with the feathers now long blown away. And beside the shrine was a trail.

He didn't like the look of it. Narrow and jutted, the path twisted down the steep canyon side. He had run up and down the mesas for as long as he could remember, but the depth of the canyon made the rim seem higher than ten mesas.

Tiyo picked his way down at a walk. By the time the sun was leaning to the west, his legs bore scrapes and bruises, and ached miserably, and his ankles trembled from the constant strain of going downhill. The thought of a night on the trail made him push his legs faster in spite of the danger. Nuva, he noticed, followed quietly behind, sure in her steps and untiring. Why had he worried? He was grateful for her company, grateful the old chief had insisted that she come.

At last they reached the river, nothing more than a busy stream now wandering through the immense river bed it once had filled. Tiyo sank to the ground and scooped the icy water to his mouth till his stomach hurt. Tired and bloated, he could barely make himself get up again and continue, but the sun was low and he hoped to find the spring before dark.

They followed the river until, round a bend of sheer rock, the canyon walls suddenly spread wide. Not far upstream, another, smaller canyon funneled into it, but he could see that this river bed was dry. Was this the place where the smaller river met the large one? From the shrunken size of the large river, Tiyo was not surprised that no water ran in the smaller. He searched for the trees that would signal the spring's presence.

He was about to give up and find a place to bed down for the night when a motion caught his eye high against the canyon wall on his side of the river. In the fading light, it took him a moment to make it out. When he did, his heart dropped. Smoke. He couldn't see any fire; the rise of the land in a series of hills reaching to the canyon wall blocked his view. But the gruesome stories about the renegades crowded his mind.

Calling softly to Nuva, Tiyo scrambled up the first hill. From the top, he could see the cottonwoods clustered against the canyon wall. The spring must be there. To the right of the trees, barely visible now in the darkening sky, the smoke rose. A camp of some sort, he guessed. He crept along the ground, keeping to what cover he could find, although in the dim light he doubted he could be seen. He climbed over another small rise and then down a slope to the edge of the trees and stopped.

The trees blocked his view of the fire. He debated whether to move Nuva deeper into the trees so that she wouldn't be visible to anyone coming up from the river but decided against it. The dark of the night could hide her, and there was more danger of her being heard than seen. Every step into the trees was a step closer to the camp. This was as good a place to leave her as any.

Setting the *pahos* on the ground, he stripped off the leather strap that had bound and held them over his shoulder. One end he put around Nuva's neck, making sure that the knot couldn't tighten and choke her. The other he tied to a young cottonwood, slender enough not to take up too much strap, but strong enough to hold under pressure. It was a short tether, but he planned to be back soon. Nuva lay down without complaint, tired, he was sure, from the long trip down the canyon. Stay that way, he begged her silently, stroking her face in farewell. Don't cry out, please. Darkness, he knew, would not last long for the moon would be rising early.

When he couldn't see his hand in front of his face, he left Nuva and made his way toward the fire, now visible as flashes of red and orange in the night. If he angled to the right, he ought to run straight into it, something he didn't want to do until he was sure there was adequate cover. Instead, he headed forward toward the canyon wall, hoping the rocks might shield him as he approached the fire.

He worked his way through the trees, but before he'd gone far, he heard another sound, the drip of water on water. Even as he heard it and stepped more carefully, his foot jammed into a rock and he toppled forward, his hands splashing as they landed. He jerked himself back onto the dirt, then cautiously stretched out a hand. He felt a ridge or short wall of rocks in front of him as far as he could reach on either side of him. Leaning over the ridge, he lowered his hand until the icy grip of the water enveloped it.

He had found the spring. In the dark he had no way of knowing how big or deep it might be. Reluctantly, he turned away from the pool and toward the fire.

Softly, silently he crept toward it until the smoke stung his nose and snatches of voices floated above him like pieces of ash. Just as he feared, the trees began to thin. Afraid to go any closer, he climbed a cottonwood, inching up until he could see the camp clearly.

A small group of men, five or six maybe, sat close to an enormous fire. Behind the fire, Tiyo caught the glint of water and was surprised that the pool extended this far. Some of the men fed the fire chunks of wood, and others dragged logs and branches to the clearing from the trees.

No women, Tiyo noticed. Just men, skeletally thin. Never, even with the hunger on the mesa, had Tiyo seen a group of people who looked so starved. Their skin stretched over their bones, making their faces grotesque. They wore filthy, ragged shirts and pants that were ripped off at the knees. It was hard to tell in the firelight, but Tiyo thought they had the light-colored hair and beards he had been told belonged to the *Bahanas*. Renegades.

From the emptiness of the camp and the absence of women, Tiyo guessed that they didn't live there. Was it a hunting party, maybe?

Their skin stretched over their bones, making their faces grotesque. Was it a hunting party, maybe?

But how long would they stay, and how would he ever fill the transplanter jar if they didn't leave?

He thought about it. If he hurried before the moon rose, he could whisper the prayers in the dark at the pool's edge and fill the jar now. But he was exhausted. How could he ever make it back to the mesa, running without stopping?

Somehow he had to, because to wait with Nuva was to invite discovery. If he filled the jar now, by the time he reached the trail up the canyon he'd have the moonlight to light the trail. It chilled him to think of it, the canyon trail by moonlight, but not as much as the thought of being in the hands of the renegades.

He eased to the ground, and slipped back through the trees to where Nuva was tied. She was sleeping, head curled on her back, snoring slightly as goats do, and didn't so much as move when Tiyo took the *pahos* and left again.

When he reached the edge of the pool, he replenished his water jug and tied it on his back. Then, carefully sticking the *pahos* in the rocks lining the water, he bent his face toward the pool and whispered the serpent's true name, saying: "I offer these *pahos* to you. Hear my people's prayers and send us rain." And help me run. Please help me run.

For an anxious moment, Tiyo wondered if he would get a response from the serpent, but no sound came from the water. He could make out the shape of the pool now, and it was much bigger than he had imagined until he remembered it extended as far as the renegade's camp.

He had to hurry. Already the moon was on the horizon, bathing the world in light. Pulling the transplanter jar over his head, he plunged it into the icy water. His fingers, cold and awkward, fumbled with the knot to reattach the filled jar against his chest.

He ran back toward Nuva, racing the moon, dismayed at how much more he could see. The shapes of trees and rocks took on detail and cast long shadows. He moved as fast as he dared; he couldn't risk falling and breaking the jar.

Then, just as he was almost to where Nuva was tied, he heard voices, heard loud, rough laughter. In a panic, he darted into the shadow of a tree, but remembered the jar — he wasn't allowed to stop. He ran toward Nuva, crouching, keeping to the shadows as much as possible, thinking that the voices were coming from the camp behind him. But then their torches flared *ahead* — they were coming up from the river, the same way he and Nuva had come earlier. The band of trees hid her from the camp but offered no protection from that direction. How stupid of him not to have hidden her inside the trees! And then it came to him — it was a *trail* the renegades were traveling on, a trail leading to the pool, the same trail Tiyo and Nuva must have fallen onto earlier. And Nuva stood tied right in the middle of it, under the bright moon, waiting to be caught.

He raced toward her, but even as he saw her, standing taut in the moonlight, she let out a loud bleat. He hesitated, his hand on the sacred jar. The men must have heard it. If he rushed up and cut her loose, could they outrun the renegades? Maybe ... maybe ... but if he got caught, his people died with him. Only a second to decide, a second to weigh the risks of losing the jar, his people's lifeblood, against the chance to save Nuva's life. A second to realize there was only one choice he could make.

"Oh *Nuva*!" he cried silently. "*Nuva*!"

And he ran back into the shadows, away from her, not able to tell if the screaming he heard came from Nuva or from inside himself.

He circled, hoping to rejoin the trail below the men before they thought to come looking for him. Shouts of discovery rose from where Nuva was tied. Even as he sickened over what that meant, he hoped it would give him a little time. Moving from shadow to shadow, as fast and as low to the ground as he could, he listened for footsteps behind him. Someone was coming, he thought, and looked back over his shoulder. Nothing moved. Suddenly, two shapes sprang at him from the shadows ahead.

He reached for his knife, but one of them seized his arm and wrenched it backward, yanking it brutally behind his back. The other hit him in the stomach so hard that for a moment he couldn't breathe. He twisted away from them, his arm hurting as if it were being ripped out of its socket. Then his other arm was caught. He kicked wildly at the man who had it, but a blow from behind knocked his legs out from under him. He fell face down into a clump of grass, his arms still pinned behind him, throbbing. Somehow the jar had remained intact.

They tied a rough, scratchy rope around his wrists, then another through his elbows, tightening it till he couldn't think for the pain.

The two men pulled him back to his feet and without speaking, half-dragged, half-kicked him back to camp. Whenever Tiyo lagged, they jerked the rope round his elbows, sending spasms of agony through his shoulders.

Finally, they stopped and held Tiyo tight, one on each arm. Tiyo looked up into the face of a man, tall, bearded to the chest with matted red hair. The leader, Tiyo guessed, from the deference of his two captors.

"We got him," one of them said. "Trying to run back toward the river like you thought."

The leader slid a dirty finger down Tiyo's cheek. "Only one?"

Over the answer, over the shouting and commotion at the camp, Tiyo heard the bleating of a goat.

"Damn Indian," the bearded man said softly. "Thought you could climb a tree and spy on us?" He grabbed Tiyo under the chin and pushed his head back until Tiyo thought his neck would snap. "Not a lot of meat on this one."

Then his hand moved to the jar. "What's this?"

Tiyo stared in horror, unable to answer.

The man took the jar by the narrow neck in one hand, pulled out a knife with the other and sliced the strap holding the jar round Tiyo's neck. Then he smacked the jar across Tiyo's face.

Tiyo gasped. He searched for words, but found only pain singing through his mind like the wind in a cave, like the wail of a goat.

He searched for words, but found only pain singing through his mind like the wail of a goat.

An impatient voice somewhere behind Tiyo asked, "Are we going to eat that goat?"

And the bearded man gave an ugly laugh and tossed the jar on the ground. "Goat today, boy tomorrow." He took Tiyo's face in his hands, bending so close that Tiyo gagged from the foulness of his breath.

"Ever been roasted alive?" He gestured to the men holding Tiyo. They pushed Tiyo backward toward the fire. The flames sent spasms of agony up and down his back, and in spite of himself, Tiyo screamed.

The leader laughed again and motioned to the men, who pulled Tiyo away from the flames and released him, though the ropes still bound his arms behind his back. "Just so you can look forward to it," the bearded man said. With a sweep of his leg, he tripped Tiyo, pushing him down on his back.

He lay there, the pain from the burns and the pressure on his arms

almost unbearable. He wriggled over to his side. There was a moment of bliss as the pressure came off his arms, but the burns throbbed unmercifully.

But the rope should have been burnt also. If only he could find a weak spot. Tiyo worked his hands, blistered and raw, against the rope. And then he heard Nuva's cries clearly. He saw one of the men drag her, struggling, bleating, near the fire.

Two men grabbed her feet, and held her upside down by the legs so that she hung head down. Another put a knife to her throat.

Tiyo thrashed against the rope, but it wouldn't give. Maybe the fire — he rolled closer to the flames.

"Easy! Don't kill her outright," he heard the leader say. "Just enough of a cut so she can bleed out real slow. The meat's better that way."

The man with the knife moved his hand and a thin red line marred Nuva's white throat. But before he could draw the knife away, Nuva screamed and twisted into it, deepening the gash so that the blood flowed freely. The men holding her feet gave way and she dropped to the ground. Lunging to her feet, she darted toward the trees and for a moment Tiyo's hopes soared, but then one of the men caught the strap, breaking her escape until another man could fling himself at her and pin her to the ground.

They pulled her up, two on her back legs and one at her head, and the blood poured down her shoulders and back, crimson staining the white until all was red. She stopped struggling and sagged, limp in the men's hands.

"Christ, she's dead," said the bearded man and swore heatedly at the others. "Dress her out."

Dead, thought Tiyo. As dead as the transplanter jar lying broken in the fire, as dead as his people's hopes. He turned hard, rolling into the fire. Let it burn away the ropes that held him helpless while all that he loved died, and if the rope didn't give way, let the flames consume him.

He heard the shouts of the men around him, but the fire searing his flesh, searing his soul, made them seem distant, as if in another world. His world was fire and pain, and he writhed with it, crying out because he could not contain the cries, his voice roaring with the rush of the flames, "Paloloqang! Paloloqang! *Ina-Ingu*!"

And then the men's shouts changed to screams of terror and there were flames, nothing but flames raging higher and higher, white hot, blackening the sky with the smoke, the whole world burning around him, through him, Masau's fire come to take him to the underworld, his death fire rising to the stars.

There were flames, Masau's fire come to take him to the underworld, his death fire rising to the stars.

And just as suddenly, the fire melted and washed over him cold and wet, numbing him, soothing him, until he could hardly find air to breathe. *Rain.*

Finally, it stopped. Tiyo lay, eyes closed, stillness covering him like a blanket.

Then a voice spoke.

"You called my name."

Tiyo opened his eyes. From the center of the pool rose a serpent, as large as any tree Tiyo had seen, with brightly colored feathers growing out of its head.

"You called my name," the serpent repeated.

Tiyo whispered, "Paloloqang?"

"Not Paloloqang," said the serpent.

Had he gotten it wrong then? He couldn't think.

"I am Paloloqang, but that is not what you called me."

The secret name, then. Tiyo should have known. It was only to be whispered at the pool and in his agony he had shouted it for all to hear. He waited for the serpent's anger, but the serpent didn't speak. Did he want to hear it again? Tiyo waited, the silence lengthening. Finally, he tried it.

"Ina-Ingu?" *My Father-My Mother*?

And the serpent moved, but it wasn't one, Tiyo realized. There were two. Two serpents so intertwined he could scarcely tell one from another.

"Give it to me the way you received it."

The way he received it? He saw himself in the kiva, supporting the old chief, embracing him as he received the name. But the serpent — serpents, Tiyo corrected himself — rose from the center of the pool. How could he do that? He stretched his arms and legs tentatively and was hit by a wave of pain and nausea.

"*Come*!"

He couldn't stand so he rolled, each movement a thousand knives in his skin, until he reached the pool, thinking he might drown when he hit the water and not caring much if he did. But as soon as his hand broke the surface of the pool, he was swept up to the serpents, encircled by them, only now it felt like arms clasping him, burning through him, caressing him as a parent might caress a child.

"The name."

He whispered the name as his whole being seemed to split apart from the light that coursed through him. It made him ache with a yearning that he knew would never leave him, joy so intense that it was almost too painful to endure, and through it all, love.

"My son. I will send rain."

It was the last thing Tiyo remembered. He awoke under a bright sun, and found himself stretched out on the sand by the pool. Had it all been a dream? Lying on the warm sand, he wondered. But he had only to think of the serpents and the yearning came back, whispering joy.

He moved and his hand hit something. Sitting up, he saw that it was the transplanter jar, blackened from the fire but intact, the charred corn cob stopper neatly stuck in place. He stared at it, amazed, and then looked around the camp site. The bodies of several men, black and stiff, lay not far from him. Did the rest escape? He looked around anxiously.

And then he saw her. Nuva. Once white as her name, she now lay bloated and rotting under the sun, her coat black with flies and crusted blood.

Nuva! He stared, motionless, until his eyes hurt from the looking, but what he saw, again and again, was Nuva tied to the tree, Nuva left to the renegades, while he ran the other way. And each time it played in his mind, the memory of the serpent's love faded and the cold inside him grew.

Finally, he turned and walked back toward the river. He could do nothing for her now except give her a proper burial. She at least deserved that. He searched until he found a yucca plant, then cut the root out of the ground with his knife, peeling away the outer layer. With a stone he pounded the root until the pulp was soft enough that it would yield suds when wet.

Then, kneeling beside Nuva, he cradled her face in his arms, gently washing the crown of her head with the yucca suds. This was the rite of burial; she would be sent to the underworld cleansed.

When he was finished, he hoisted her over his shoulder and searched the canyon wall for a crevice deep enough to contain her. He would not leave her to decay beside the bodies of the men who killed her, would not let her bones mingle with theirs. He climbed until he came upon a big enough crack, and dropped her in. And then he piled the stones upon her, one after another, just

as he had piled them on his mother. And, just as he had shed no tears the day of his mother's burial, his eyes now stayed dry. But the cold inside him soaked through his bones and sent icy fingers up and down him.

Returning to camp, he picked up the transplanter jar. He had that, at least. Something to give his people.

He started down the trail. The running made him suddenly aware of his body, of the strength in his arms and legs, of the absence of pain. He looked down at himself in wonder. No burns or bruises. He ran with a strength he had never before known, with a speed he had only dreamed about.

The god had healed him. The thought of it made Tiyo sick with anger, made him want to shatter the jar against the rocks. He was whole while Nuva lay rotting in a crevice. *Why the one and not the other?*

He pushed his legs as fast as they would carry him, helpless in his wrath, running from the god, running to the old chief whose promise stabbed at him every time he remembered the knife at Nuva's throat. And as he ran, the coldness he first knew at his mother's death deepened with every step until he felt frozen through the very center of his being, and he marveled that his heart didn't stop altogether, trapped in the block of ice inside him.

He didn't stop until he reached the spring at Second Mesa and placed the transplanter jar in it, but once on the way he slowed a little and looked back over his shoulder.

He saw a small cloud.

THE SKY WAS BLACK WITH CLOUDS, AND THE air hung heavy with the promise of rain by the time Tiyo reached the kiva. It was dark inside, too, so dark that Tiyo thought at first no one was there. But then he made out the old chief's shape, sitting without a fire at the far end of the room.

"Grandfather," he said, announcing his presence.

"*Tiyo*!" The old man struggled to his feet and shuffled over to Tiyo, arms outstretched.

But Tiyo stood back and didn't touch him.

The old man dropped his arms and faced Tiyo, silent.

Finally, Tiyo said, "You told the story wrong about the rainmaker."

The old man raised his eyebrows and Tiyo spoke again.

"You said he came back unharmed."

The old chief said nothing and Tiyo wondered if he could see that Tiyo had frozen, that there was nothing left now inside him except the suffocating cold.

"I'm sorry," the old man whispered.

"You swore she'd come back."

"I know," said the old man. "I thought I had to. When I saw the goat, I knew what Paloloqang would ask of you. And I didn't know if you would be willing to give it."

"You had to *lie* to me?"

The old man said in a tired voice, "We would have all died, Tiyo." He paused. "But I was wrong. It was your choice and I tried to make it for you. I tried, but I didn't."

Tiyo closed his eyes and saw Nuva tied to the tree as the men bore down upon her, saw himself abandon her as he tried to save the jar. It had been his choice and he had made it and now the spring would have water, but he felt no joy from it. Only the cold freezing him solid.

"No," said Tiyo, "you didn't."

"I'm sorry, Tiyo." The old man's voice was husky and he coughed, his whole body shuddering with the spasms. "When I knew who she was, I knew what her choice would be. But I was afraid of yours."

"Choices!" Tiyo couldn't keep the anger out of his voice but the old chief didn't react. He stared at Tiyo steadily as if waiting ... and suddenly Tiyo heard what he had said.

"*Knew who she was?*"

"Your mother, Tiyo. Back from the underworld in the form of a goat to accompany her son. To help him become a rainmaker and save his people."

It was a long time before Tiyo could speak and when he did he said, "I don't believe it."

"When I looked into the goat's eyes that morning, I saw your mother's face."

Tiyo stood motionless and the old man sighed. "Believe what you will. But Tiyo ... " he leaned forward and placed a trembling hand on Tiyo's arm, "*know* this. I'm sorry. I prayed that I might live until you returned so that I could ask your forgiveness."

His voice was now a coarse whisper. "I know how much you loved her."

Who? Did the old man mean Nuva or his mother? It was more craziness, this idea that they were the same. And yet, he heard his mother's voice coming unbidden into his mind: "I will live to see you bring rain to your people." His mind filled with images: Nuva dangling a broken strap the morning that he left, Nuva crying out just as Tiyo thought he might be able to cut her loose and slip past the renegades.

"Please," the old man's eyes were wet now and the effort it cost him to stand showed in the sweat lining his face. "Forgive me."

Tiyo searched for his own anger and saw instead the worry the old man carried for the villagers, felt its weight and knew it was as heavy as the rocks that filled Nuva's grave. He tried to speak, to move, but he was frozen. Surely if he bent his neck, it would crack. And if he didn't, the cold would kill him. He wrenched the gesture from his body, a nod.

The old chief spread his arms. "Then come here. Bless me before I go to the underworld."

He drew Tiyo to him, and clung to him, weeping comfort and forgiveness. Somehow, the touch from the old man's frail body ignited a coal deep within Tiyo's heart and a tiny part of him began to warm. But his own eyes stayed dry.

Finally, Tiyo helped the old man to his mat. "I'm going to find my uncle," he said.

"Be careful," said the old man as Tiyo tucked the blanket around him. "There's rain in the air." And his face split into the widest grin Tiyo had ever seen on him.

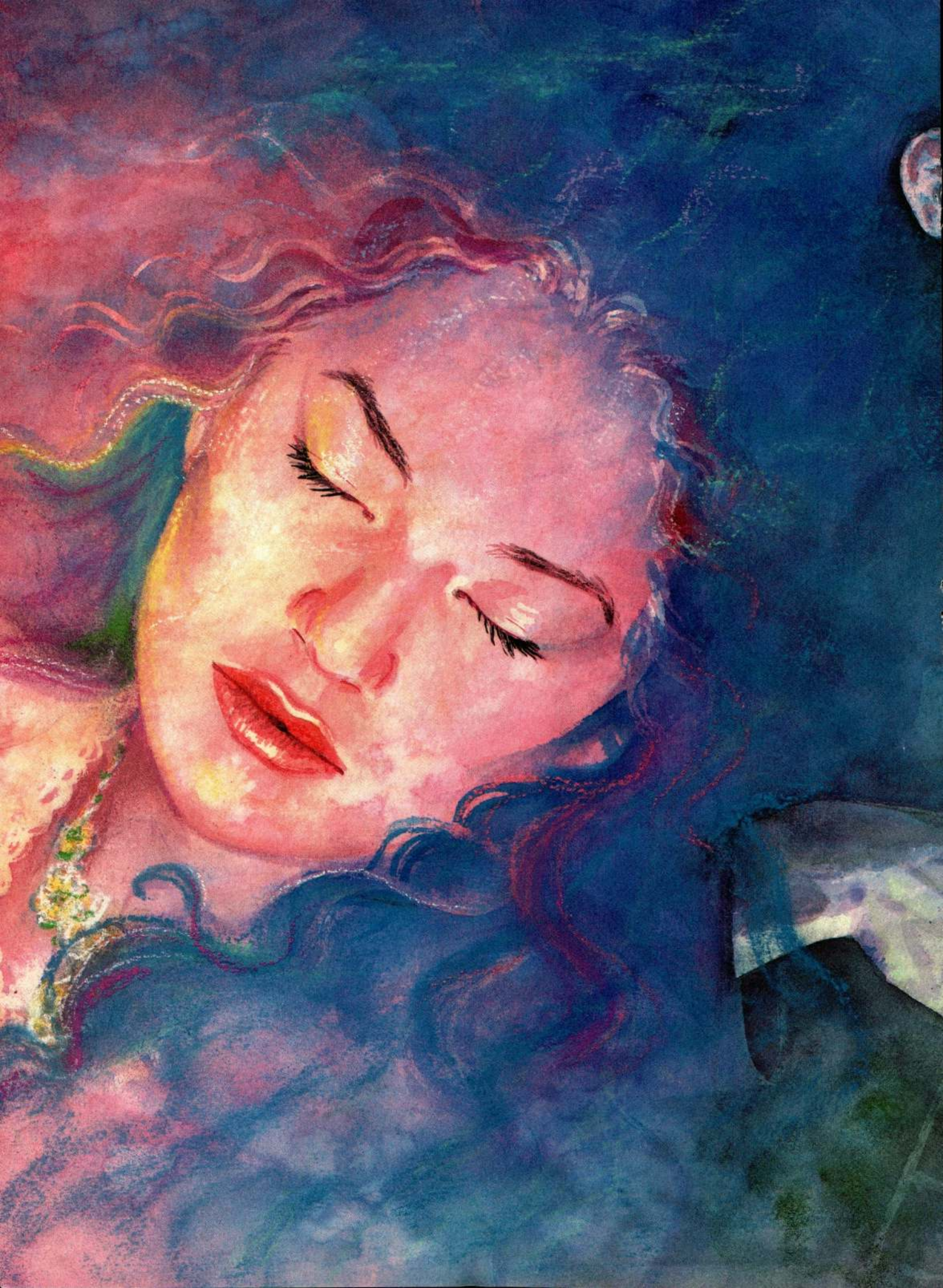
Tiyo climbed out of the kiva and started down the trail leading to the bottom of the mesa. A flash startled him, made him raise his head to the clouds. Lightning. It began to rain. Before he could move, a drop hit him squarely in one eye and then the other. And it was as if those drops ended not only the drought in the land, but the drought inside Tiyo as well, and his eyes began to brim with their own water. And as the rain poured upon the aching, thirsty land, Tiyo's eyes poured out the grief that had frozen his soul.

"Nuva!" he cried with sobs that racked his whole body. "*Mother!*"

It didn't matter whether or not the old chief was right and they were the same. He cried for them both, and cried for the world in which choices that saved could also kill, cried until the cold inside him warmed into a pain that was fiercely, wonderfully alive.

And finally, when there were no more tears, he sprawled on his back and gazed with wonder at the rain upon the land. ❧

The god had healed him. The thought of it made Tiyo sick with anger, made him want to shatter the jar against the rocks.





SHINING NOWHERE BUT IN THE DARK

CHARLES DE LINT
Illustration by Mary O'Keefe Young

If we look at the path, we do not see the sky.
— Native American saying

Because I could not stop for Death, he kindly stopped for me.
— Emily Dickinson

1

"SPARE CHANGE?"

The crowd eddies by on either side of me as I pause. It seems pointless, doling out a quarter here, a quarter there, as if twenty-five cents can make that much of a difference in anyone's life, but I can't stop myself from doing it, because it does make a difference. It means we're at least paying attention to each other, acknowledging each other's presence.

Come lunch time, some people buy lottery tickets, others waste their money on junk food. Me, I usually brownbag it. Then after I've eaten, I go out for a walk, making sure I have a handful of change in the pocket of my jacket.

So I turn to the girl, my hand already in my pocket, fingers sorting through the coins by feel. She has a raggedy Gothic look about her, from her pale skin and the unruly tangle of her short dark hair to the way her clothes hang from her skinny frame. I find myself wondering, is this all she has to wear or a fashion statement? These days it's hard to tell. Scuffed workboots, torn jeans, black T-shirt, black cotton jacket. She has so many earrings in one ear that I'm surprised her head doesn't tilt in that direction. Her other lobe has only one small silver stud of an owl's head. Except for her blood red lipstick, she's entirely monochrome.

She smiles as I drop a pair of quarters in her palm. "If this were a

fairy tale," she says, "you'd have just guaranteed yourself some unexpected help later on in the story."

It's such a charming and unexpected line, I have to return her smile. "But first I suppose I'd have to stand on one foot and call your name three times while hopping in a circle."

"Something like that."

"Except I don't know your name."

She grins. "It's not supposed to be easy, is it? But maybe a random act of kindness is magic enough, in its own small way. Maybe I owe you now and I'll have to come to you if ever you need my help."

"That's not why I gave you the money."

"I know." She touches my arm, her fingers weightless on my skin and soft as a feather. "Thanks."

She pockets her fifty cents and turns away. "Spare change?" I hear as I start walking again.

JUST BEFORE I FALL ASLEEP THAT NIGHT, I FIND MYSELF THINKING about fairy tales. I try to imagine myself in stories of old women and spoons that go adventuring and talking cats that repay a small kindness with a greater kindness until I remember that I'm not a thirdborn child the way the central characters usually are in a fairy tale. That brings me wide awake again. Once upon a time I was the middle child; now I'm an orphan, without siblings. Thinking about family takes me to a place I try to never go, but it's too late now.

I lie awake for hours, watching the slow shadow of the streetlight outside my window as it crawls across my ceiling. Finally I get up and go to the window. I mean to pull the shade, but then I see someone standing out there on the street, under the streetlight, looking up at me.

He's dark-eyed, darker-haired, that ravened thatch an unruly nest of untamed locks standing up at attention around his head; alabaster skin — brow, cheeks, throat, hands, even his lips. He has a face like a knife, all sharp angles, and there's a Gothic look about him that reminds me of the girl panhandling earlier today. With him it's reinforced by the old-fashioned cut of his clothes — Heathcliff come off the moor, not exactly the way Brontë described him, but the way I imagined him, a figure of shadow and pale skin that haunted my sleep for weeks. I used to live in delicious dread of his appearing at the foot of my bed and sweeping me up into his arms and away. Where, I was never exactly sure. Before I got the chance to figure out where I might like a man like that to take me, my life was irrevocably changed and I didn't think about that kind of thing again for a very long time.

But that was over twenty years ago, when I was barely into my teens, and still had dreams. Right now I'm thirty-six, suffering from a familiar insomnia, and not at all happy to have acquired my very own stalker, no matter how handsome he might be. Bunching the open "V" of my nightgown closer to my throat with one hand, I step back, out of his line of sight, and sit down on the bed again. Safe, I think, only something makes me turn my head and that's when I see the spare change girl from earlier today, sitting on the other side of my bed like an invited guest.

"Don't worry about him," she says. "He won't hurt you."

My heartbeat goes into overdrive. I start to ask how she got in here, but the words stick in my throat and a half second later I realize that I have to be dreaming. My pulse is still drumming way too fast, but I don't feel quite so nervous now. It's funny. Maybe I don't dream — or at least I don't remember my dreams — and I certainly can't remember ever knowing that I was dreaming *while* I was dreaming, but here I am, doing both. I wonder if I'll retain any of this tomorrow morning.

"Do you know him?" I find myself asking.

"He's my sister."

"*He*?"

She laughs. "Oh, I guess that sounds pretty confusing, doesn't it?"

Even for a dream, I think.

"We're ... wyrds," she says. "Or at least that's what they used to call us."

"Weirds?"

I don't realize until later that we're using two entirely different words.

She nods. "Exactly. As in the fates. Sometimes we were called muses, too, though I doubt anyone would do that today. There doesn't seem to be a whole lot of interest in muses anymore."

I give her a blank look. My hand goes to the night table and finds cigarettes, matches and ashtray. I have the usual twinge of regret as I light up, that familiar I-really-should-quit-one-of-these-days nag, but I ignore it. Dropping the cigarette package and matches on the bed between us, I take a long drag, then tip the grey end of my cigarette into the middle of the ashtray.

"These days," she explains, "people don't really care about using the muscles of their own imaginations. I mean, why bother when the media can provide every thought or idea you'll ever need?"

"That's a bit cynical."

"But no less true."

I shrug. "And it doesn't explain what he's doing down there — or why you're in my bedroom, for that matter."

Or, come to think of it, what she was doing out on the street at noon, cadging spare change.

"My sister being down there is my fault," she says. "He saw me talking to you earlier today and when he realized that you don't dream at all, he had to have a closer look."

"I'm dreaming now."

"Are you?"

I better be, I think, but decide to change the subject.

"So you're fates," I say.

She nods again. "There are three of us — like in the stories. They got that much right."

I finally start to twig. "You mean like in the Greek myths?"

"Something like that."

I'm thinking, there are three of them in the stories, one to spin the threads of our lives, one to weave them, and one to cut them when you've reached the end of your thread. Spin, weave, cut. Birth, life, death. I steal a glance out the window and Heathcliff's still standing out there, looking up. He hasn't got a hooded cloak or a scythe, but I'm pretty sure I know which one of the three he is now. Snip, snip.

My cigarette's already at the filter. I stub it out and light another one.

Even sucking smoke into my lungs the way I am, I can't believe my time has come. I'm not ready, but then who is? I've always subscribed to Woody Allen's philosophy: "I'm not afraid of dying; I just don't want to be there when it happens." Or I guess I just pretended I did. I feel guilty about being alive, but fear's a bigger emotion. I'm afraid of dying. Not because it means my life's over — what I've got is no big deal — but because of who I might meet when I do die and what they'll say to me.

"And ... your other sister?" I ask.

"She's spinning."

I nod because it makes sense. The spare change girl sitting on the edge of my bed is too much a part of the here and now, too full of vitality not to be the weaver. Life. I take a drag from my cigarette and sneak another look at her older sister, waiting for me down there on the street.

"Why does she look like a man?" I ask, thinking maybe I can postpone the inevitable if I can just keep her talking.

The girl shrugs. "He got disbelieved into looking the way he does. That sort of thing happens to us when people stop dreaming their own dreams. And no dreams at all makes it even worse."

I'm finding this way too confusing, even for a dream.

"Okay," I tell her. "So your sister's down there because I don't dream." I find that I don't want to let on that I know why he's really here — maybe because if I ignore it, it won't be real. "Why are you here?"

"Because it's my fault that he's here right now and I didn't want

you to be upset. A lot of people find him unsettling."

Maybe the strangest thing about all of this is the way she keeps referring to her sister as "he."

"But sooner or later … ." I begin.

"He would have come around to see you," she says, finishing when I let my voice trail off. "It just takes time, getting to everyone. You probably wouldn't have even known he was nearby, if you hadn't seen me earlier today."

One of the curses of fairyland, I think. Once you've had a glimpse of it, you can always see it, just there on the periphery of your vision. Or at least that's the way it goes in some of the old stories. I played Good Samaritan with fifty cents, and the next thing I know I've got two of the Greek fates hanging around.

I've finished my second cigarette even quicker than the first. I stub it out and light yet another one. I don't want to hold on to what she's telling me, but I can't let it go. Death's down there on the street, his gaze meeting mine every time I look out the window. Eternity seems to linger in his eyes and I can't read him at all. Is he bored, sad, amused?

"If he's busy," I say, turning back to the girl. "I can wait. Really. I'm in no hurry."

"That's not the way it works," she tells me. "Everybody has to dream, just as one day, everybody has to die."

2

JENNY WRAY WOKE IN A COLD SWEAT. SHE SAT UP AND stared frantically at the side of her bed, but of course there was no one there. She leaned forward so that she could see out the window and there was no one standing under the streetlight either. She started to reach for the cigarettes on her night table, then remembered that she'd given them up over ten years ago.

God, it had seemed so real. Death below, his younger sister in the room with her. The taste of the cigarette.

She sat up against the headboard, arms wrapped around her knees, reliving memories that had no business hanging on for so long, no business still being so clear. It was a long time before she could even think of trying to get back to sleep. Her visitors had been wrong about one thing, she thought as she stretched out once more.

"See," she murmured into her pillow. "I do dream."

Because what else could it have been?

"When we visit, we come like a dream," she heard someone reply. "But it's not the same. It's not the same thing at all."

She recognized the voice. It was the spare change girl. She could picture her face without having to open her eyes, could imagine Death having joined her, standing at the foot of the bed now in all his Gothic trappings.

The idea of dreaming about them still being in the room with her gave her the creeps. Maybe if she pretended they weren't there, they'd simply go away. The skin prickled up and down her spine at the thought of their presence until she stole a glance through her eyelashes and saw she really was alone. When she finally drifted off, she wasn't sure if she was falling asleep, or dreaming she was falling asleep. The difference seemed important, but she was too tired to try to make sense of it now.

3

THE DREAM WOULDN'T GO AWAY.

It followed Jenny through the day, clinging to the wool of her thoughts like a persistent burr until she knew she had to talk to someone about it. The trouble was who? She was temping these days, only her second day at this particular office, so she couldn't approach one of her coworkers, and it wasn't the sort of topic that normally came up in conversations among her own small circle of acquaintances; she didn't have any real friends. It wasn't until she was leaving the office that she thought of someone who wouldn't think she was weird or laugh her off. So instead of taking the bus home, she caught a subway downtown.

It took her a little while to find the shop she was looking for. When she finally did and went inside, she stood in the doorway, momentarily distracted. The air in the shop was several shades darker than outside and redolent with the scent of incense. There were packets of herbs for sale and bins of candles; crystals displayed on swatches of dark velvet along with ornately designed daggers and goblets; ceremonial hooded cloaks hanging along one wall and books crammed on shelves, many with the word "magic" or "magick" in the title, as well as any number of items that Jenny couldn't identify, or if she recognized the item, didn't know the use to which it would be put, presented as it was in this context.

Ash Enys, the young woman behind the counter, was the niece of a woman Jenny had met while sitting a booth at a craft show a few years before. She reminded Jenny of last night's dream, of the middle fate with her pale skin and punky hair. They shared the same monochrome wardrobe, black jeans, jacket and combat boots, white T-shirt, smudges of dark kohl around the eyes. Ash's lips even had the slash of blood red lipstick, except the shade of hers ran more towards the purple spectrum. The only real difference was that the spare change girl hadn't had a nose ring.

"Never thought I'd see you in here," Ash said with a smile when she recognized Jenny.

Jenny returned her smile. "Why not?"

"I don't know. Doesn't seem to be your style."

"So what is my style?"

"Uptown," Ash said. "No offense."

Jenny liked to dress well, not voguing, but definitely stylish. Today she was wearing patterned stockings, heels, a form-hugging short skirt, silk blouse. She didn't use much make-up, but the little she did was artfully applied. Her dark hair was a short page-boy with long bangs. Minimal jewelry — a stud and a dangling earring in one ear, the latter's match in the other, a plain silver band on the ring finger of her right hand.

"No offense taken," she said. "But everybody's got secrets."

They were alone in the store. Feeling bold, she tugged her blouse free from her skirt and lifted it so that Ash could see the small silver ring that pierced her navel. She got it one day when she wanted to prove to herself that she was brave. That hadn't happened. Bravery, she realized, had nothing to do with what one chose to do to one's self. But she did like the secret of it, the knowledge of its existence, hidden there under her clothes where no one else could see it.

"Cool," Ash said.

Jenny tucked her the tails of her blouse back into her skirt.

"So what are you looking for here?" Ash asked.

"You." As Ash's eyebrows rose questioningly, Jenny went on to explain. "I remember Gwen telling me you'd gotten a job here and I had a question about, you know — " She waved her hand vaguely in the direction of a shelf full of books on dreaming. "Stuff like this. Dreams."

"I'm not exactly an expert," Ash said.

"Well, you're the closest to an expert that I know."

Ash smiled. "Uptown girl."

"That's me."

"So what do you want to know?"

"What does it mean when you dream about Death?"

"Yours or somebody else's?"

"I mean the personification of Death," Jenny said. "You know, a pale-faced guy, all in black."

"Did he ask you to play chess?"

Jenny smiled at the film reference, but shook her head. "He just stood in the street outside my apartment last night, watching me."

"Well, some people think dreams can be like premonitions — "

Jenny shivered.

" — while other people think that's bullshit."

"What do you think?"

Ash shrugged. "If I had a dream like yours, I'd definitely lean towards it being bullshit."

"No, seriously."

Ash leaned on the counter to look more closely at her. "This has really got you spooked, hasn't it?"

"No. Of course not. It's just … ." Jenny sighed. There was no point in lying. "Yeah. I found it really creepy. Especially because, normally, I don't dream — or at least I never remember my dreams. But this one won't go away. It keeps popping back into my mind when I'm least expecting it."

"Well," Ash said, "symbolically, meeting Death isn't necessarily such a bad thing. I mean, Shiva is the God of both Dance and Death, and in the Tarot, the Death card is more often considered to be a symbol of transformation and spiritual rebirth. Even in Western culture we didn't always depict Death as the hooded skeleton with a scythe. The Greeks envisaged Death as the daughter of night and the sister of sleep." She cocked an eye at Jenny. "Maybe that's why Keats described himself as 'half in love with easeful Death.' They used to call sleep the little death, you know, so maybe when we die we step into a dream that never ends because we never wake up again."

Jenny stared at Ash, not really seeing her. She was remembering what the middle fate had told her about dreams and dreaming. When she finally focused her gaze she saw Ash wearing an apologetic look.

"I guess I'm not being much help, am I?" she said.

"She said the reason he'd come to see me is because I don't dream," Jenny told her.

"She?"

"The middle fate. That's what she said they were — wyrds. The fates — or at least two of them. She was the one who was actually in my room — Death was sort of hanging around on the street outside."

"This sounds like it was quite the dream."

"I was," Jenny said. "She looked a little bit like you."

Ash laughed. "Generic Goth, right? I guess I deserve that for my uptown girl comments."

Jenny shrugged that off.

"So where does the girl come in?" Ash wanted to know.

"I don't know exactly," Jenny said. "The first time I saw her I was awake — she was panhandling near my office and I gave her some money. But then later I dreamed about her and that feels more true now than what I know for sure happened. She kept going on about muses and dreams and … ." She let her voice trail off. "God, would you listen to me? I'm talking about it as though it actually happened, as though she really was in my bedroom."

"I've had dreams like that," Ash said. "Everybody does. It's like you wake up and you can't believe it didn't really happen. I know this guy who had a dream about cats Morris dancing. He really, really believed it had happened. He was so excited when he woke up, he wanted to tell everybody. I just happened to be the first person he saw that morning, so I saved him the embarrassment of trying to convince anybody else that it had been real."

Jenny was only half-listening. "She said it wasn't a dream," she told Ash. "She said that they came like a dream, but it wasn't the same thing as a real dream. She was pretty emphatic about it."

"So what did they want?"

"That's what I was hoping you could tell me."

Ash lifted her hands, palms up. "The Goth strikes out," she said, "because I don't have a clue. I guess you'll just have to ask them yourself if you dream about them again."

"I hope the opportunity never comes up," Jenny said.

4

BUT OF COURSE IT DOES. NOT THAT NIGHT, NOR THE NEXT, but Friday, I no sooner put my head on the pillow, than I find myself in this club I've never been in before — at least I don't recognize the place. Dark, smoky, loud. The DJ's spinning "Le Bien, Le Mal" by Guru and MC Solaar. I remember the first time I heard the piece, I thought it was so weird hearing somebody rapping in French, but it's got a definite groove and the dance floor is happening, so I don't think I'm the only person who likes it.

There's a guy standing close beside me and I don't know if I'm with him, or if the crowd's just pushed us together, but he lights my cigarette for me. The music's turned up past conversation volume which makes it hard to talk. He's nice looking and I think maybe I'd like to dance, but then I see a familiar figure going up the stairs on the far side of the club and out the door. I think: It's Ash, but I know it's not. It's not any other generic Goth either. I tell the guy I've got to go, using sign language because the music's still seriously loud, and he just gives me a shrug. I guess I wasn't with him after all.

It takes me awhile to make it across the club and up the stairs myself. By the time the cool air outside hits my face, there's no sign of the girl. I have that hum in my head — you know, the one that follows you home after a concert or a night of clubbing — and I figure I must have had enough loud music for one night, even though all I can remember is the last few minutes or so. I hail a cab and settle down in the back seat. We go about a half-dozen blocks before I turn to look out the window on my left and realize the girl's sitting beside me. Was she there all along, or did she simply materialize on the seat beside me? It doesn't really matter because that's when I figure out that I'm dreaming again.

"See," I say to her, "I told you I dream," but she shakes her head.

"And I told you," she says, "that we only seem like a dream. It's easier for you to deal with us that way."

"Who do you mean by 'us'?"

She shrugs. "People like me. Or my sisters."

One of whom's been disbelieved into looking like a guy and just happens to be Death. It's so strange, when you think about it. Death's got sisters. They never told us that, but then nobody has the real scoop on death, do they? There are all the light at the end of the tunnel stories, but those people come back, so who knows if their near-death experience really connected them into the secret, or if they simply imagined the light and the tunnel?

"So … ." I clear my throat. "Where *is* your sister? Out taking a few lives?"

I don't feel nearly as cocky as I'm trying to sound.

She gives me a strange look. "More like living them," she says.

I've no idea what she's talking about, but I figure as long as I've got the ear of one of the fates, I might as well ask her a few questions, find out for sure what everybody else has to guess at.

"Why do we have to die?" I ask.

She shrugs. "What you really want to know is, 'Why do I have to die?'"

"I guess."

She doesn't answer me right away. Instead she says, "It's such a beautiful night, why don't we walk?"

When I agree, she taps the cabbie on the shoulder and tells him we'll get out here. He pulls over to the curb. She doesn't offer to pay, so I dig out my wallet, but he just shakes his head. Says we didn't go far enough to make it worthwhile. I don't argue. I just thank him the way my companion does and join her on the pavement, but it's the first time I ever saw a Newford cabbie turn down money.

The spare change girl slips her arm in mine and we head off down the street. For some reason I don't feel weird, walking arm in arm with another woman like this. Maybe it's because it's such a beautiful night, one of those rare times when the lights of the city just can't drown out the starlight that's pouring down from the sky above. Maybe it's because I know I'm only dreaming.

"Why do you have to die?" she says, returning to our earlier conversation. "You might as well ask, why were you born? It's all part of the same mystery."

"But it's not a mystery to you, is it? Or at least it's not to your sister."

"Which one?"

"You know. The one who was standing outside my apartment the other night. He'd know, wouldn't he?"

"Perhaps," she says. "He's always had access to a lot of very potent imaginations. It wouldn't surprise me at all if he's run across the answer in one lifetime or another."

I know she doesn't mean he's immortal — though of course he is. She means all the lives he's taken.

"But you don't know," I say.

She shakes her head. "I think it's all part of a journey and what

you're thinking of as the start and the end are just convenient markers along the way. You don't get the whole picture right away. Maybe you never do. Maybe it's like *tao* and it's only the journey itself that's important, what you do on it, how you grow, not where you come from or where you finally end up."

"I can't buy that," I tell her. I have an old pain aching in my chest, but I don't speak about it. It's not something I can speak about — that I even know how to speak about. But while I can't deal in specifics, the general injustice that crowds my head whenever I think about death and how people die is easy to verbalize.

"What about little kids?" I ask. "What about infants who die at birth? What do they get a chance to learn? Or what about all the terrible suffering that some people have to undergo while others just drift peacefully away in their sleep? If this isn't random, then, I'm sorry, but Death's one spiteful bastard."

She gets this sad look. "Death can't pick when you die, or how you die, just as no one can decide what you dream."

"You make it sound like the people who suffer, *choose* to suffer. That a baby *chooses* to die when it does."

"You have so much anger in you."

"Well, excuse me," I tell her, "but I'm not like you and your sisters. I have to die."

And probably sooner than I want to, considering how my companion's older sister has taken this sudden interest in me. But that's not why I'm really angry. I think maybe she knows, only she doesn't call me on it.

"But is dying so bad?" she asks. "How else can you move on to what comes next, if you don't leave the baggage of this life behind? What comes next might well be more wonderful than anything you can even begin to imagine in this world."

"You don't know that."

"No," she admits. "I don't. Just as I don't know why some die in pain and others in their sleep. Why some die young and others in their old age. Why good people can suffer and evil ones prosper."

"Well, what about your sister?"

"What about him?"

"Doesn't *he* know? I mean, if anyone should know, it'd be him."

"My sister has many good qualities," she says, "but omniscience isn't among them."

"I just think if he's going to show up standing outside my apartment that he should at least have the decency to tell me where I'm headed next."

She shakes her head. "All he's concerned with is why you don't dream."

"Why should that bother him?"

"I told you. People not dreaming changes us. Every one who doesn't dream is like a little black hole. If it isn't tended to, it'll draw other dreamers into its net and soon there'll be vast numbers of you, abed and dreamless."

"Well, what does that matter? I mean, who really cares if we dream or not?"

"We do. He does."

I try to digest this. "So dreaming is important to him."

"Very much so."

"I was talking to someone recently," I tell her, "and they mentioned something about how people once called sleep the little death."

She nods her head. "I remember."

Like she was there, but I let it pass because she probably was.

"So maybe," I say, "dying is like going into a dream that never ends because you never wake up again."

This seems to interest her. "I like the idea of that," she says.

I feel like I'm on a roll now. "And maybe that's another reason why it's so important that I dream. Because if I don't dream, then I won't die."

She doesn't reply. Instead she says, more to herself than to me, "I wonder if that's the real reason John's been around for all these years."

"Excuse me?"

"John Buttadæus. It's like he just doesn't quite scan."

"What are you talking about?" I ask.

She blinks out of her reverie and gives me this irresistible smile that I can't help but return.

"What were you saying?" she asks.

I start to repeat what I've just said, until I realize she's gone back to what we were talking about before she spaced out on me.

"Does this mean that so long as I don't dream, I don't die?" I ask.

"I don't think there's been an appointment made for you yet," she tells me. "At least not that anyone's told me."

"And we're not dreaming right now?"

She shakes her head.

"Well, I can sure live with that," I say and then I have to laugh at the double meaning of what I've just said.

I pause to light a cigarette. Our reflection in a store window catches my eye. She looks Gothic, I'm uptown, but the poor light and dark glass blends the differences. We could almost be sisters.

"Those are going to kill you," she says as I put away my lighter.

I blow a wreath of blue-grey smoke into the air between us.

"Is that inside information?" I ask.

She shakes her head.

"Because I quit years ago," I tell her. "And besides, I don't dream, remember? I'm going to live forever. I could probably take them up again if I wanted to."

I have this giddy feeling that I can't shake. I feel immortal, the way I did when I was a kid, when my life was still normal. That makes me almost fall into the trap of reliving the past, but I manage to sidestep the memories. I've had to live with them for almost as long as I can remember. Right now, I just want to hold onto this good feeling and never let it go.

I'm still smiling when I wake up the next morning, never mind that what I experienced last night had to be a dream. Except it wasn't — at least not according to Death's sister, the middle fate, and if anybody should know, it'd be her, right? So I'm safe from him — safe from what I know will be waiting for me when I die. Until I have a real dream. So I guess the big question is how do I stop myself from inadvertently doing just that?

5

SATURDAY FOUND JENNY BACK AT THE OCCULT SHOP, BUT Ash didn't appear to be working this morning. In her place behind the counter was a tall, green-eyed woman who presented a look that was the direct opposite of Ash's Goth image. She wore a high-necked black dress over tights the same colour and a pair of combat boots. The dress was unadorned except for a bone ankh broach pinned above her right breast. Her long blonde hair was gathered into a loose pony-tail that hung down to the small of her back in a golden waterfall. She looked like she should be in a fashion magazine instead of working the counter here.

"Ash doesn't work Saturdays," the woman told Jenny when she asked. "Maybe I can help you. My name's Miranda."

The store was much busier than it had been the last time Jenny was here — too busy, she thought, for the kind of conversation that would ensue when she explained why she was here. And where would she even begin? Ash at least had the background.

"It's sort of personal," she explained, trying not very successfully to hide her disappointment.

"Well, you can usually find her over in the park on weekends," Miranda said.

"The park?"

"Fitzhenry Park. She's generally hanging somewhere around the War Memorial with Cassie or Bones."

Jenny had no idea who Cassie or Bones might be, or what they would look like, but she fastened onto Ash's possible whereabouts with a singlemindedness that surprised her and was almost out of the store before she remembered to thank Miranda for her help.

"No problem," Miranda replied, but she was speaking to a closed door.

6

JENNY FOUND ASH SITTING ON THE STEPS OF THE WAR Memorial with a man she decided had to be Bones. He was a Native American — probably from the Kickaha reservation north of the city. His skin had a dark coppery cast and his features were broad — the chin square, eyes widely-set, nose flat. His hair was as long as Miranda's back in The Occult Shop, except he wore his in a single tight braid, with feathers and beads interlaced in the braiding. He looked to be in his early-thirties and so far as Jenny was concerned he could have stepped into modern Newford right out of some forgotten moment in history, if it hadn't been his clothing: faded jeans, torn at the knees, scuffed leather work boots, a white T-shirt with "Don't! Buy! Thai!" written across the front.

"Hey, pretty lady," he called to her as she came near. "Medicine's right here — plenty powerful — if you got the wampum."

Before Jenny could answer, Ash elbowed him in the side.

"Enough with the talking Tonto already," Ash said. "She's a friend. Jenny, this is Bones; Bones, Jenny."

Bones gave Jenny a grin that made him look a little demented and she took an involuntary step back.

"He likes to act the fool," Ash explained, "but don't mind him. He's okay."

"I'm okay, you're okay," Bones said. "Pull up some stone, Jenny, and have yourself a seat."

Jenny gave him an uncertain smile. There was something about the way he looked at her — some dark light in his eyes — that reminded her of the eldest fate, standing outside her apartment the other night, except it didn't wake awe in her so much as nervousness. An uncomfortable feeling washed over her, a sense that in this man's presence, anything could happen. And probably would. She wasn't sure she was ready for another strange encounter — not when she still hadn't gotten over the one that had brought her here in the first place, looking for advice.

"What are those for?" she asked, pointing at a pile of tiny animal bones that lay on a square of beaded deerskin by Bones' feet. "Besides giving you your name, I mean."

She asked as much out of curiosity as to get him to stop regarding her so intently.

"It's the eyes, isn't it?" Ash said. "That and the grin."

Jenny looked up at her. "What?"

"She thinks you don't know what to make of me," Bones said.

"Well, I"

"Bones always makes people feel a little strange when they first meet him," Ash said. "He says his real name translates into something like Crazy Dog. I say, whoever named him knew what they were doing."

Bones nodded, still grinning. "And these," he said, indicating the bones, "are my medicine wheel."

"Oh."

Ash laughed. "But you didn't come here to get your fortune read — did you?"

"No. I" Jenny hesitated, feeling as intimidated with Bones' presence as she'd felt in The Occult Shop with all the people standing around. But she took a breath and plunged on. "Do you know a way to make sure that you don't dream?" she asked.

Ash shook her head. "No, that's a new one on me."

"It's just that I know you sell herbs and stuff to help people dream"

"Like a dream-catcher?"

"I guess. What's that?"

Ash described the spider web-like weaving of threads that went back and forth around a twig that had been bent into the rough shape of a circle, how the pattern, and the feathers, beads, shells and the like woven into it, were supposed to draw good dreams to a sleeper.

Jenny nodded. "Yes, like that. Only something that'll do the opposite."

"You've got me."

"You don't like your dreams?" Bones asked.

"No, it's not that. I don't dream."

"So what's the problem?"

"I want to make sure it stays that way."

"Maybe you should go back to the beginning," Ash suggested, "so Bones knows what we're talking about."

"I"

"Don't feel shy. He's a good listener and maybe he can help. He's gotten me out of a jam or two."

Jenny felt a flush coming on. "I don't know. I feel weird"

"Weird is good," Bones said. "Means you're not locked into what's here and now, but you're seeing a little further than most people do."

That was an understatement if Jenny had ever heard one. "Okay," she said with a sigh. "It started with a dream that wasn't a dream"

7

"SO ONE OF THE FATES IS A GUY," BONES SAID WHEN JENNY finished relating her recent experiences.

"I think he's like Coyote," Ash said. "A shapeshifter — only the face he wears is the one you least expect."

Jenny looked from one to the other. "What are you talking about?"

"The guy in your dream," Ash said. "The eldest fate."

Bones shook his head. "No, what we're really talking about is you, Jenny. The visions you're experiencing and the people you're meeting in them are just something the spirits are doing to try to get your attention."

"I'm not sure I follow you," Jenny said.

"I don't know you," Bones said, "and you don't know me, so I don't know how much I should tell you. I don't know what you want to hear." He sounded regretful, but the crazy look in his eyes seemed to make a lie of that.

"What's that supposed to mean?" she asked.

"I don't want to piss you off. I mean, what's the percentage in it? What do either of us get out of me telling you something you don't want to hear?"

"I'm listening."

"But are you hearing? The spirits spoke to you and what did you do? You took their gift and instead of learning from it, you're trying to turn it to your own advantage." He shook his head. "Never works, you know."

Jenny could feel her face go stiff. "What the hell's that supposed to — "

"Anger's good," Bones told her, breaking in. "It's one of the ways the spirits tell you that you're alive."

"I'm not — " Jenny began, but she broke off.

Angry? No, she was furious at his cocky, know-it-all manner, but she heard an echo of what he'd said a few moments earlier — *I don't want to piss you off* — and that was enough to make her wonder just why she was so angry. She looked at Ash, but Ash didn't want to meet her gaze. She turned back to Bones. His face gave away nothing. Crazy eyes watched her back, solemn and laughing at the same time.

She took a couple of steadying breaths and forced herself to calm down, to let the hostility go. It wasn't that she was suddenly into making nice. It was more that she realized that Bones seemed to understand the experiences she'd had — certainly better than she did — and he was right: he had nothing to gain in making her angry, or hurting her feelings. So maybe it was worth her while to hear him out.

"Okay," she said finally. "I am feeling angry. But I want to hear what you have to say."

"You sure?"

Ash elbowed him again before Jenny could reply.

"Okay," he said. "Let me put it this way. Does the sun rise and set just for you?"

Jenny shook her head.

"But it passes over you and makes you a part of its wheel, doesn't it?"

"I guess."

"Then perhaps you should learn to accept that you are a part of the world's wheel and not struggle so hard against what must be."

"So what are you telling me?" Jenny asked. "That I should just lie down and die?"

Bones grinned that crazy grin of his. "No, I'm saying you should get back on the wheel. Dream. Live. Don't look at the ground when you want to see the sky. What's the point of living forever if you don't experience life now?"

"Who says I'm not experiencing life?"

"You do. Your dreams-that-aren't dreams do. The spirits that have come across from the medicine lands to talk to you do."

The anger rose up in Jenny again, but this time she was quicker to deal with it. She looked away from them, bit at her lip. The dark place inside started to draw her down into its grasp and she couldn't seem to fight it.

"I'm sorry," Bones said, and she sensed that he meant it.

"You don't understand," she said finally.

"That's the problem with living, nobody really understands. But we've got to carry on all the same. The trick isn't to save up our points for when we die so that maybe we can buy ourselves into a better life. The trick is to have that better life now. To make it for ourselves. To take it, if people are trying to keep it away from us."

Jenny still couldn't look at them. She picked at a loose thread on the seam near the knee of her jeans. The past was swallowing her again and this time she couldn't trick it into going away. It lay too thick inside her, that miasma of old hurts and griefs.

"Sometimes" she began.

She had to stop and gather up her courage before could go on. This wasn't something she talked about. It was too hard to talk about. She took a steadying breath and tried again.

"Sometimes," she said in a small voice, "I don't feel I have anything to live for. Sometimes I feel like I don't deserve to live, but I'm more scared of dying." Finally she looked up. "I'm scared of dying and seeing them and of what they'll say to me, because I know it wasn't fair, that they had to die while I went on."

"Who died?" Ash asked softly.

"Everybody. My parents. My little sister. My older brother. My cousin did it. I was only ... I was only twelve when it happened. He killed everybody except for me. I hid under my bed and waited for him to come ... to come get me too, but he never did."

"Your own cousin?" Ash said. "Jesus. That's horrible."

"What happened to him?" Bones asked.

"He killed himself. That's why he never came after me. He ... he killed everybody else and then he shot himself. I was under my bed for the rest of the night and most of the next day, just ... just waiting for him."

Ash shook her head. "You poor thing. You were just a little kid."

"And then ... then I went to live with my grandparents, but they died too."

"But your cousin ... ?" Ash began.

"He ... he didn't kill them. They just ... died"

It was getting harder and harder for Jenny to get it out. Starting had seemed tough, but going on was worse. Her chest was so tight she could barely breathe. She couldn't see because she was blinded with tears. Her throat felt thick, making her choke on the words before she could get the words out.

"None ... none of them died easy. Not my own family. Not my grandfather from cancer, a few ... a few years after I came to live with them. Not my grandmother ... she had Alzheimer's. By the time she finally died she didn't even know who I was anymore"

She finally turned her face towards them. "Why did they all have to go like that? Why not me? I should have died with them. Instead, I've just got this emptiness inside where family's supposed to be. I feel so ... so lonely ... so guilty"

Ash came and sat beside her and put an arm around her, drawing Jenny's head down to her shoulder. Bones took her hand. She looked at him. Even through her tears she could see that crazy light in his eyes, but it didn't seem so strange anymore. It felt almost comforting.

"You've got to talk to those spirits one more time," he said. "This time you've got to tell them what you're feeling. That you don't want to die — not till it's your time — but you do want to live until it's your time. You want to be alive. You want to dream. You've got to ask them to help you let it all go."

"But she said the reason they came to me was *because* I don't dream. What's the point of me telling them what you're saying I should? Wouldn't they already know it?"

"The thing with spirits," Bones told her, "is they want you to work it out on your own. Then, when you ask them for the right gift, they might help you out."

"And ... and if they won't?"

"Girl," Bones told her, "you've got a lot of strong medicine tucked away inside you. Everybody does. Those spirits don't want to help you, you come back and talk to me again and I'll see what I can do about waking it up for you."

"Why can't you just help her now?" Ash asked.

"Because these are spirits we're talking about," Bones said. "You don't mess with spirits unless you've got no choice, Ash — especially not spirits that are working their medicine mojo on someone else. There's no way I'm getting in between them until they get off this wheel and I can climb on it. That's the way it is."

8

SO HERE I AM, WAITING FOR DEATH TO SHOW.

I'm trying to feel brave — or at least project a little courage even though I have none — but I don't think it's working. I don't know which I'm more afraid of: that I won't dream, that I know I'll never die and have to go on like this forever, or that maybe he'll take me away with him right now. Except in the end, it's not Death that joins me in my bedroom, but the middle fate, the spare change girl.

"Where is he?" I ask her.

"You've decided to dream once more," she says, "so he's gone on to deal with other matters."

Harvesting other lives you mean — but I don't say that aloud. I don't know whether to feel relieved that it's not me this time, or angry that he even exists in the first place.

"Why can't he just leave us alone?"

She shakes her head. "Without his gift, what would you have?"

I'm sick of this idea that without death, that without knowing we're all going to die one day, rich and poor, whatever our creed or colour, we can't appreciate life. Even if it is true.

"I wanted to talk to him," I say.

She gives me a long considering look. "Did you want to talk to him, or to the eldest of us?"

And then I understand. It hits me like a thunderclap booming under my skin. It's been her all along. *He's* the middle fate, Life; she's the one that cuts the thread and ferries us on. My heartbeat gets too fast, drumming in my chest. All my resolutions about facing the past and my fears drain away and I want to tell her that I've changed my mind again. I don't want to dream. I don't want to be more alive if it means I have to die.

"Is this it?" I ask her. "Have you come for me?"

"Would that be so bad?" she says.

She projects such a strange aura of comfort and happiness that I want to shake my head and agree with her.

"I'm scared," I tell her.

"Fear lets you know you're alive," she says, "but that doesn't mean you should embrace it."

"You're starting to sound like Bones."

"Ah, Bones."

"Do you know him?"

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NAIRICH

Ancient cultures can grind against brash, new ones much as tectonic plates can grind against each other. And with much the same result.

BY WILLIAM F. WU

Illustrated by Web Bryant

CHARLOTTE ENG BOWED HER head against the drizzle in the April twilight as her late mother's black woolen coat flapped about her petite body. In one hand, she lugged a battered leather suitcase bearing all her belongings. Far down the steep city slopes, foghorns sounded off San Francisco Bay.

As she hustled north along DuPont Street, she passed baskets of bok choy, garlic, and fresh fish lining the walk. The aroma of fresh tea drifted from a window. A horse clopped past her in the street, pulling an empty produce wagon. Soon, however, she left Chinatown behind.

On Union Street, Charlotte turned right, her twin black braids whipping in the wind from the fog-shrouded Bay below in the distance. South of Telegraph Hill, as a weary chestnut mare plodded past her pulling a white milk wagon, she stopped to peer up at a street sign in the failing light. Then she hurried up a quiet side street.

Charlotte had rarely left Chinatown. As a child, she had learned that if she crossed the wrong street, boys would throw rocks at her and her friends. In this neighborhood, she hoped to find her destination quickly.

Nairich stood against the twilit sky, a misshapen dark gray against the clouded sunset beyond. Richly carved wooden pillars supported a porch roof shingled in black around the first floor. On the second story, a balcony circled the outside, bounded by a black iron rail; carved pillars stood against the walls between tall, rectangular windows. Rooms jutted from each other in different shapes — rectangular, semi-circular, semi-hexagonal. Heavy drapes hung in each window. Above those rooms, large windows glistened with rain-streaks in steep gables, revealing a third floor hidden behind the long, angled, black roofs over the second.

Beneath the porte-cochére, a gas lamp hung cold and dark over the main doors. Charlotte did not know where to find a servant's entrance. Shivering, she walked up the cobblestone drive and climbed the front steps.

The brass knocker, cold and wet in her hand, clanked loudly. Charlotte huddled in the black wool coat. At last the heavy wooden door swung open.

An elderly woman stood in the doorway. Tall and gaunt, she wore a stylish gray, shirtwaist suit, its front panel trimmed with pearl buttons and white piping; the high, tucked collar and button cuffs closing the bloused sleeves were piped to match, as was the long, nine-gored, pleated skirt. A white lace scarf draped over her shoulders, its points hanging past her waist. Her gray hair swept up in a lush bun.

"I am Elizabeth MacGrewar." Her lined, narrow face did not change as she spoke in a strong, guttural accent with trilled 'r's.

"I'm Charlotte Eng. Ah Hing was my father."

The tall woman studied Charlotte coldly. "Step inside, please."

Charlotte entered and her hostess closed the door with a heavy thump. "You will address me as Mrs. MacGrewar. Follow me."

"Yes, Mrs. MacGrewar."

Charlotte's footsteps tapped loudly on the polished hardwood floor in the foyer, making her self-conscious. The hard heels of Mrs. MacGrewar's high-button, laced shoes of black dongola kid were silent. In the parlor, Charlotte's footsteps also turned quiet on a dense, elaborately woven carpet. Gas lamps on the walls remained dark. A Roman divan stood across from a fireplace that was cold and empty behind a standing screen.

Mrs. MacGrewar sat down in a wing chair with a floral print of blue and white, angled before the fireplace. A brass clock showed the wrong time, not clicking, on the mahogany mantel. Heavy drapes hung from the ceiling to the floor over the windows.

Charlotte remained standing; she felt her braids dripping rainwater on the back of her neck.

"Why have you come here?" Mrs. MacGrewar put on a pair of rimless eyeglasses, fitting the gold mounting on her high, slender nose.

"My mother passed away last week," Charlotte said meekly. "My father died several years ago. I wish to apply to you as a domestic."

"Then you know that your mother and father used to live here in Nairich as domestic servants in the employ of my late husband and me?"

"Yes, Mrs. MacGrewar."

"You know the circumstances under which they left?"

"They left Nairich to work in Chinatown just before I was born." Charlotte gently set down her suitcase, unable to hold it any longer.

"Aye, I never heard from them again. My husband had passed on about that time." Mrs. MacGrewar gazed into the cold fireplace through her rimless spectacles.

Charlotte laced her fingers together and twisted them anxiously.

"How old are you, then?" Mrs. MacGrewar looked up at her.

"Twenty, Mrs. MacGrewar."

"So you were born in 1886. Aye, that's the year your father and mother left Nairich and my husband died. You grew up in Chinatown?"

"That's right, Mrs. MacGrewar."

"I ha'e no doubt you can cook and clean if your mother raised you. Ha'e you worked before?"

"I've been working in the same tea shop where my mother cooked."

"So you ha'e work experience. You understand my Scots brogue?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You ha'e my condolences on their passing. Ha'e you other family?"

"My mother left me in the care of a man I call 'uncle,' but he isn't a real uncle." Charlotte felt tears stinging her eyes. "I'm afraid."

"You're afraid of him? This so-called uncle of yours — a highbinder, is he? You fear he will sell you to his tong in Chinatown?"

"Yes, ma'am," Charlotte said softly.

"Vile people — though I'm hardly in a position to complain."

Charlotte did not understand what she meant, so she said nothing.

"Do you believe in spirits, Charlotte?"

"Spirits?"

"Your people believe the spirits of the dead still live, do they not?"

"Why — yes."

"You must believe in spirits to live in Nairich."

AFTER MRS. MACGREWAR LEFT HER ALONE IN HER SMALL, WINdowless quarters below stairs, Charlotte set her suitcase on the bed. When she turned the small brass handle on the single gas lamp, she heard the gas hiss and lit it with a match from her suitcase. By the yellowish light, she unwrapped clean cloth from a small porcelain statue she had inherited from her mother.

It represented Guan Gong, the patron deity of travelers, who wore a long, green robe and a squarish black hat. He carried a halberd. With frowning black eyebrows and a trailing black beard, he glowered toward unseen threats. She placed him on a small shelf over the highboy, certain that her father had placed him there years before she was born.

Charlotte set a small, framed studio photograph of her father on a lower shelf. Dressed in his black Chinese shirt with cloth buttons and a high collar over loose matching pants, he stood stiffly in front of a painted landscape. Her mother had taught her as a child what to do.

ON THE HIGHBOY BELOW GUAN GONG AND HER FATHER, CHARlotte set out a small brass incense holder. She placed two sticks of incense in it and lit them. Then, praying silently, she bowed and wished her father well.

Charlotte also thanked Guan Gong for looking out for her. She had left no indication to her "uncle" where she had gone. Even if he somehow guessed, he would not risk trouble with a wealthy *lo fan* widow in this neighborhood; Charlotte was not worth that much to him.

One of the bells fixed high in a corner of the room jangled.

She turned off the gas in the lamp and hurried away.

CHARLOTTE FOUND OLD, WELL-seasoned firewood by the side of the house and lit a fire in the cast-iron kitchen stove. She prepared dinner and served it to Mrs. MacGrewar in the cold, spacious dining room by candlelight. The kitchen had old canned and jarred food, nothing fresh. Mrs. MacGrewar sat in silence, using silver tableware and European china with pink and blue flowers on white; she sipped wine from a crystal goblet. Then she retired to the parlor, where Charlotte set a fire roaring in the fireplace, wound and set the mahogany clock, and served her tea in an intricately carved silver service.

Deeply grateful to be employed here, Charlotte cleaned the dining room and the kitchen. Mrs. MacGrewar did not seem to have eaten or drunk very much, if anything at all. Walking out to see if Mrs. MacGrewar needed anything, Charlotte found her standing in the doorway to the parlor, her tall silhouette black against the firelight as she gazed up the main stairs.

Charlotte turned to look behind her.

Large, framed paintings hung on the wall, muted in the shadows. They had been placed alongside the steps. Charlotte could not see them clearly.

"My husband, the late Captain Dugald MacGrewar, dead these two decades," Mrs. MacGrewar whispered calmly. "He cannae hear or see me, for I tried to speak with him when his spirit first walked."

Tingling with confusion, Charlotte watched as Mrs. MacGrewar's gaze slowly moved up the staircase.

"He walks when he wishes. I've not much time left to help at my age."

"Help?" Charlotte whispered. She had not seen anyone.

"In Scots lore, a spirit cannae rest if he was not given funeral rites or buried in hallowed ground, yet I know my husband had both. Reverend Colquhoun laid him to rest behind Nairich — it's not a large yard that I have, but enough. A headstone marks his grave beneath a tree."

Charlotte simply stared at her.

"Aye, lass — it makes no sense. I watched the coffin lowered myself." Mrs. MacGrewar's shoulders sagged. "Do you wish to leave?"

"No," Charlotte whispered. "I fear my uncle and his friends more."

Mrs. MacGrewar looked down at her through her rimless spectacles.

Charlotte said nothing as rain pattered against the windows.

In the morning, Charlotte opened the kitchen curtains to the leafy branches of a tall oak nearly lost in the bright morning fog. With Mrs. MacGrewar's permission, she walked to a neighborhood market and purchased fresh groceries. She served breakfast to Mrs. MacGrewar, ate hers by the warmth of the stove, and then cleaned up. Distant foghorns sounded off the bay again as she wiped her hands and left the kitchen.

Charlotte spent the morning using a feather duster. Mrs. MacGrewar sat in the parlor gazing into the flames in the fireplace. The house itself remained silent except for Charlotte's own footsteps and the ticking of clocks she had set and wound. Occasionally she heard the clop of a horse and the creak of wagon or carriage wheels out on the streets. After the crowds and chatter of Cantonese in Chinatown, Nairich felt eerily quiet.

She began dusting in the parlor and then moved to the foyer and the dining room. When she approached the long, curving main staircase now in daylight, she saw the framed paintings lining the wall clearly for the first time. Instead of sweeping the dust from the imposing mahogany pillar at the end of the banister, she paused to look at the first painting.

It was a full-length portrait of a man with rugged, ruddy facial features. A trim, reddish beard lined his jaw without a mustache. He stood by the rail of a ship, dressed in a long, blue coat with brass buttons and a matching blue cap with a short brim.

Charlotte studied his face. He seemed like an ordinary man in middle age. His portrait did not frighten her, but she felt a chill as she recalled Mrs. MacGrewar's belief that his shade had mounted these steps last night.

"He brought me here in 1850," Mrs. MacGrewar said behind her.

Startled, Charlotte gasped, then struggled to regain her composure; she had heard no footsteps.

Mrs. MacGrewar ignored her reaction. "I was Elizabeth MacKay, born in Paisley. He met me in 1850 on a side trip home to Glasgow from a London run — a lass of 19 I was, 11 years younger. He cut a fine figure in his uniform. We wed in Glasgow, but he brought me here to live."

Charlotte, her heart still pounding, nodded politely.

"I lived in a modest flat during those early years here in San Francisco, near other ship's officers' wives. He was at sea most of the time. Oh, I pushed him hard to make more money, young thing that I was."

Charlotte just wanted to return to her dusting, but she said nothing.

"That ship is the *Natchez*, launched in 1841." Mrs. MacGrewar pointed with a long, crooked finger to the next painting, in which a sleek clipper ship cut blue waves under full sail. "'Twas before I met him, but I know of such matters — Dugald told me all about his ships, often more than I wished. He sailed under Captain Robert H. Waterman on the *Natchez* to China for tea. They carried it to London, you see. Then they brought goods and passengers to New York, and more of the same around the Horn back to San Francisco. Many of his voyages circled the world that way."

Charlotte nodded and looked at another painting, also of a ship.

"The *Sea Witch*," Mrs. MacGrewar said bitterly. "Dugald followed Captain Waterman to her in 1856, in a cursed move."

Charlotte turned to look at her, surprised. "It was?"

Mrs. MacGrewar's gaunt face had gone hard, her eyes angry. "Aye, she was fast; I give you that. Yet the *Sea Witch* led him to his death, I say."

"Did she sink? Is that how he died?" Charlotte asked.

"Aye, she sank, but that was many years later. Dugald had become captain of his own ship by then — the *China Sea*, a California steamer with both stacks and sail. He died right here at home in Nairich." She lowered her voice. "He had a painting of her, too, but he never hung it."

"I don't understand. The *Sea Witch* led him to his death?"

Mrs. MacGrewar adjusted her rimless glasses and studied Charlotte for a long moment. Wind rustled the trees outside the house. "Your father was a fine man." She turned and walked away on silent footsteps.

Charlotte stared after her, mystified.

By the end of her first full day at Nairich, Charlotte realized that Mrs. MacGrewar required very little from her. Mrs. MacGrewar wanted her to prepare and serve meals and maintain the kitchen. The house had not been dusted for a long time. Charlotte kept logs on the fire and turned on the gas lamps for Mrs. MacGrewar. She never heard her mention friends, relatives, or social occasions.

After serving Mrs. MacGrewar's after-dinner tea in the parlor, Charlotte returned to her room. By the light of the gas lamp, she looked again at the picture of her father. Since he had died, she had prayed to him as her mother had taught her. She had never seen a spirit, however, even last night when Captain MacGrewar had apparently climbed his staircase.

Charlotte had no idea what to make of Mrs. MacGrewar's desire to help her husband's ghost. She was correct that Charlotte had been taught spirits lived on after death, but Charlotte knew of no way to lay a ghost to rest, especially a Scot who had already been properly buried according to his religion. Her mother had merely taught her to burn incense and to pray.

A bell jangled. It was a different one this time, calling her upstairs. As before, Charlotte turned off the gas in the lamp and rushed out.

On the second floor, Charlotte stopped in the doorway to Mrs. MacGrewar's bedroom. The hall remained dark. In the bedroom, a single gas lamp on the wall burned with a yellowish glow. Mrs. MacGrewar stood at the threshold of the balcony, holding one side of the French doors open; her white dressing gown fluttered in the brisk, damp breeze.

"Mrs. MacGrewar?"

"Come in, Charlotte." Mrs. MacGrewar closed the French door soundlessly, and held up a small tumbler in her other hand. "Drambuie, my dear. A link to my home. I still have cases Dugald brought back for me."

"Would you like me to pour you another glass, Mrs. MacGrewar?"

"Nay, not at all. Come in."

Shyly, Charlotte walked to the middle of the bedroom.

Mrs. MacGrewar patted the padded seat of a straight-backed, wooden reception chair placed next to an ornately carved oaken chifforobe.

Reluctantly, Charlotte walked to the chair. She saw two small, sepia photographs, framed in engraved silver, on the chifforobe. One displayed Captain and Mrs. MacGrewar, young and smiling in formal attire before a painted city park scene. The other was a portrait of Captain MacGrewar in front of a plain backdrop in his later years, his face lined and frowning.

Rain began to patter against the windows of the French doors.

Charlotte sat down primly, her holds folded tightly in her lap. She looked up at Mrs. MacGrewar's shadowed face, wondering why she had rung for her.

"Do you hate my husband, Charlotte?"

Speechless with surprise, Charlotte merely shook her head.

"Are you certain, then?"

"I ... don't understand, Mrs. MacGrewar."

"Eh?" Mrs. MacGrewar sipped her liqueur, eyeing Charlotte carefully.

"I never knew him." Charlotte decided that a polite question might please her. "Would you like to tell me more about him?"

Mrs. MacGrewar squinted down at her. "He had Nairich built in 1882, when he had the money at last. Then he retired at the age of 62."

"He must have been very successful."

"My husband sent your father and mother away from Nairich, back to Chinatown, after an argument. Ah Hing held no grudge?"

"They didn't talk about Nairich very much." Charlotte paused, remembering. "My mother told me she liked working here."

"Did she, now?" Mrs. MacGrewar seemed to relax a little. "He and your mother served me well, first when Dugald was at sea, then after he retired in '82. Let me see — Dugald died in '86. That was the year he sent your mother and father from Nairich. Our laundry man, Law Mok, was a friend of your father. He never returned, either."

Charlotte had known Law Mok all her life as a close family friend. She had asked him for help a week ago when her mother died. Before she could speak, however, Mrs. MacGrewar looked suddenly toward the open doorway.

The hall remained empty. Charlotte heard only the rain against the glass in the French doors. She sat rigid with tension.

Mrs. MacGrewar turned slowly as though watching someone walk into the room past them. In a long, gradual movement, she shifted her gaze from the doorway to the French doors. One of the doors slowly swung open slightly, letting in a gust of wind and spattering rain.

Charlotte held her breath.

Mrs. MacGrewar peered into the darkness outside, then jerked her head back sharply and closed her eyes.

Charlotte saw only light rain striking the rail of the balcony in reflected gaslight.

Mrs. MacGrewar opened her eyes. "I caught him jumping from the balcony. I screamed and threw my arms around him, but I couldnae stop him. And I've seen him jump countless times over the years since."

"A ghost can turn the doorknob?" Charlotte whispered.

"His spirit can hold and grasp solid objects, yet I felt nothing when I once tried to embrace him." Mrs. MacGrewar closed the door again; this time, the latch snapped firmly into place.

Charlotte tried to swallow, but could not.

"As a Scot, his spirit should have been laid to rest with his bones and Reverend Colquhoun's prayers," Mrs. MacGrewar said softly. "I've no answers and neither did the reverend. And he has passed on himself these many years."

"The captain died from the fall?" Charlotte whispered.

"Aye, lass. He came home from his last voyage on the *China Sea* tortured in the heart. The man drank his Glenlivet constantly over the four years he had left. And then one night he jumped off the balcony."

"Is that why he walks? Because he chose to jump?"

"Not by the lore I know, not after he had his proper funeral."

"I don't know how to help you, Mrs. MacGrewar. I'm sorry."

"Never you mind, lass. Now it's time I took to bed. Goodnight."

"Goodnight, Mrs. MacGrewar."

IN THE BLACKNESS OF HER WINDOWLESS ROOM, CHARLOTTE LAY IN bed listening to the rain strike the outside walls of Nairich. She realized now that Mrs. MacGrewar had rung for her to witness the captain's ghostly leap in the event he chose to walk tonight. Charlotte was afraid to reveal that she had seen nothing. Maybe Mrs. MacGrewar had failed to latch the door properly and the wind had blown it ajar for just a moment.

By implication, Mrs. MacGrewar wanted Charlotte to help lay her husband's ghost to rest simply because Charlotte believed in ghosts. However, she could not think of anything to do. As wind rustled the trees outside and the house creaked, she drifted off to sleep.

THE FOLLOWING NIGHT AFTER DINNER, MRS. MACGREWAR LOUNGED on the Roman divan in the parlor before the firelight, as Charlotte served her tea. However, instead of retiring as before, Charlotte remained standing over Mrs. MacGrewar, lacing and twisting her slender fingers nervously. Wind rustled the trees outside and branches rattled against the house.

Mrs. MacGrewar looked up from her teacup. "Yes?"

Charlotte drew in a deep breath and spoke quickly, before fear overtook her. "What happened between my father and the captain?"

Mrs. MacGrewar was silent for a moment, gazing into her steaming tea. "Did your mother care for you well, Charlotte?"

"Yes, Mrs. MacGrewar."

"Tell me about your childhood."

"I went to school most of the time. After regular school, I went to Chinese school. Um, we lived over a Chinese grocery store."

"You were a good student?"

"Yes, Mrs. MacGrewar."

"Was Ah Hing a good father?"

"Yes. I loved him very much." Charlotte paused. "I have no brothers or sisters. I know he would have wanted a son instead of me."

"So did my own father." Mrs. MacGrewar set her teacup on the tray, her face tightening slightly. "You were safe and clothed and fed?"

"Yes. And my — my 'uncle' helped with money sometimes."

"The highbinder."

"Yes."

"Your father and mother served me here very well for many years. But shortly before Dugald died, Ah Hing spoke back to him — in a manner improper for a domestic to his employer, and quite unlike Ah Hing." The firelight played off Mrs. MacGrewar's face and cast shifting shadows across the parlor.

"He never told me about it," Charlotte said gently.

Mrs. MacGrewar stared at reflected orange flames against the silver tea tray. "Your father and mother's remains were returned to China?"

"Yes. It's an old custom. Not everyone does it." Charlotte shrugged.

"My husband retired after a voyage when he returned from China without cargo in 1872. In those days, I was pushing him hard to make more money." Mrs. MacGrewar eyed Charlotte carefully.

"What did my father talk to him about?" Charlotte asked politely.

Mrs. MacGrewar spoke as though she had not heard the question. "Aye, the sea was always a harsh mistress. After Dugald left the *Sea Witch* in 1855, where he learned what they called the 'coolie' trade, he took the *China Sea* to do the same work. Money could be made bringing men of your people to work in California." Mrs. MacGrewar peered closely up at Charlotte. "It was legal in the 1850s. Starting in 1862, a U.S. citizen was forbidden by law from the coolie trade, and we were citizens by then."

Charlotte, too shy to repeat her question, imagined her father in the shadowed halls and rooms of Nairich, carrying the silver tea tray as her mother cooked in the kitchen.

"Your father and mother worked for me from the time Dugald brought me here in 1850 until he sent them away. I had no children and our friends are dead. No one comes here. Nairich could not be sold, even at a city auction, haunted as it is. And now I'm a childless widow with a walking spirit for a husband and the daughter of dead servants to attend me." Mrs. MacGrewar gazed through the standing screen into the fireplace.

Charlotte bowed and walked away, her footsteps silent on the carpet.

INSTEAD OF RETURNING DIRECTLY TO HER ROOM, CHARLOTTE QUIETLY climbed the main stairs. She crept into Mrs. MacGrewar's bedroom and took the silver-framed portrait of a frowning Captain MacGrewar from the chifforobe. Then she descended the creaking wooden rear staircase and went to her own room.

Charlotte started the gas lamp and closed her door. She placed the portrait on the lower shelf next to the photograph of her father, and lit the incense in the brass holder. As the sweet aroma wafted through her room, she prayed again.

She asked Guan Gong once more to protect her from her uncle and his kind, then dutifully prayed to her father, wishing him well. Glancing up curiously at the frowning picture of Captain MacGrewar, she added another prayer: *I hope your suffering ends. I pray that you find peace. If you want, I pray that you tell us what you need.*

Charlotte had no idea how to say it any better. Reluctantly, she let out a quiet sigh and picked up the portrait of the captain. She took it back upstairs before preparing for bed.

A SHARP, COLD WIND ROILED THE fog and clouds the next morning. Bundled in her mother's coat, Charlotte lowered her head and walked back to Chinatown. She used muddy side streets and garbage-strewn back alleys to avoid notice by her uncle or his friends as she sought out Law Mok, the family friend who had serviced the laundry at Nairich years ago. He still owned a small laundry; his horse-drawn laundry wagon stood around the corner in an alley, the horse waiting patiently in harness.

She stepped inside the narrow doorway and bowed in the warm, steamy little establishment. Behind the counter, bundles of laundry lay tied shut on the floor; neatly folded laundry sat on shelves. "Law Mok?"

Law Mok looked up from his folding, a slender, hunched man with the old scars of smallpox on his face and a long queue of white hair down his back. In a black cotton shirt and trousers similar to her own, he responded in Chinese, his voice dry with age. "Siu Meimei?"

Charlotte smiled shyly at his surprise. "Are you well?"

"I have been worried. Your uncle was asking about you."

Charlotte's eyes widened. "You won't tell him I came, will you?"

"No. His kind is evil. But he claims you owe him money."

"I don't owe him anything!"

"I know. That's just his excuse for seeking you." Law Mok smiled gently, lining his aged face. "Don't worry about me. Your father and I, we shared too much together. When your father's time came, I arranged to send his remains home to his village in China."

"I remember." Charlotte smiled indulgently; he had reminded her of that only last week when she had asked Law Mok to handle her mother's remains. He had become garrulous and lonely with age. "I want to ask you something. You tended the laundry at Nairich when my mother and father worked there?"

"So many years ago. Yes, after Nairich was first built, I picked up and delivered the laundry with my first horse and wagon. After Captain MacGrewar died, Nairich became closed to the outside world." He hesitated. "Why do you ask me about Nairich?"

"I am working there," Charlotte said meekly.

Law Mok frowned. "Sometimes I have heard rumors of Nairich from my customers in that neighborhood. They believe Nairich is haunted. Some have visited Nairich over the years with the intention of buying it, but they became frightened. No one will buy it, yet it still stands."

"What do you know about Captain MacGrewar?" Shyly, Charlotte twisted her laced fingers together.

"Eh? Your father and mother never told you about him?"

"She said only that she and my father lived and worked in Nairich."

"That's all," Law Mok mused to himself, folding another shirt.

"Yes. And — do you know anything about spirits?"

"No, Siu Meimei. I've never seen a spirit." Law Mok sighed. "What do you want to know about the captain?"

"Do you know why he jumped off the balcony?"

"All right, Siu Meimei, I will tell you. He sailed on ships that brought many very poor Chinese people here. When that became illegal, he made an even greater profit. Ah Hing told me Mrs. MacGrewar constantly pressed him for money. He carried the 'coolie' trade for 20 more years. At last, he had saved enough to have Nairich built and to retire. We liked the fact that he helped the poorest Chinese like your father and me to get here."

"And men like my uncle," Charlotte added bitterly.

"On the captain's last voyage, he left China with a hold of passengers and sailed into San Francisco with an empty ship. He retired forever."

"An empty ship? What happened to his passengers?"

Law Mok's tired eyes gave her a hard stare. "A government ship drew near the *China Sea* off the coast of California. Rather than get caught with illegal passengers, he ordered them all thrown overboard."

Charlotte blinked in surprise, barely sure she understood.

"Anyone in the crew who refused the order would be thrown over, too. They acted out of fear, but they share the guilt. We had heard of other ship captains doing this in years past." Law Mok shook his head, swaying his white queue. "At first I heard only rumors in tea houses but I told Ah Hing. We questioned as many Chinese members of his crew on the *China Sea* as we could — seamen, coal passers, stewards. Many had returned to sea right away and others would not speak of it at first. Four years passed before we felt certain of the truth. Ah Hing noticed that Captain MacGrewar drank heavily every night in the years after he retired."

"Until he finally jumped off the balcony," Charlotte whispered.

"We were angry," Law Mok said softly. "Ah Hing confronted him about his actions. The captain sent away your father and mother after that. Ah Hing and I returned to Nairich several nights after the captain died. In the darkness before his funeral, we took his coffin and left another, full of wood and rocks bundled in cloth. I took the captain's remains to Chinatown in my laundry wagon and had him put on a ship to China under a phony name. It was our revenge."

"So he is not buried in the back yard under his headstone."

"No, Siu Meimei. We arranged to have his body thrown overboard off the coast of California. Ah Hing arranged it with your uncle."

"That's why uncle claims my family owes him."

"Your father and I paid him in full. We were very angry in those days. Ah Hing and your mother never returned to Nairich. I never went back, either." He sighed again. "Nairich is shunned by everyone."

"I burned incense and prayed to the captain last night. I asked him what he needed to be at peace. Maybe I shouldn't have."

"I know very little of these matters," said Law Mok quietly. "For me, the matter is long over. Now, Siu Meimei, I must make my deliveries. I have already harnessed my horse."

Charlotte bowed and slipped out.

THAT NIGHT, IN THE DEEP DARKNESS OF HER ROOM, CHARLOTTE slept soundly. She dreamed of Nairich as she had never known it, when her mother and father were young and served Captain and Mrs. MacGrewar before she was born. As the wind blew and branches scraped against the house, she dreamed of her father and Law Mok secretly carrying the captain's coffin out to the laundry wagon, while rocks and wood lay in the coffin they had left in its place. Then, abruptly, she dreamed of Captain MacGrewar in his blue uniform and short-brimmed cap standing at the end of her bed.

Without a word, Captain MacGrewar extended his arm and pointed.

Charlotte turned her head to look. He pointed at the wall, through it, toward the back yard of Nairich. Neither of them moved or spoke.

Nairich began to shake.

The house rattled — it shook and rumbled. Her bed quivered. The statuette of Guan Gong and the portrait of Ah Hing fell off the shelf, the idol smashing on the floor and the glass on the portrait tinkling.

Charlotte had been born and raised in San Francisco; she knew an earthquake when she felt one, but this was by far the strongest.

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THIS HAPPENED IN THAT TIME, and under those laws that were, but can now only be dreamed of. There was a little girl, who was very beautiful and she was called the Beautiful Wassilissa. She came to America with her parents, who loved her very much. The Beautiful Wassilissa's father worked far away and high above in the forest of skyrises, and the Beautiful Wassilissa's mother worked at home. The Beautiful Wassilissa's mother grew very tired because her husband was far away and high above so often. On the Beautiful Wassilissa's eighth birthday, her mother came to her and said, "I am going to die so I will give you two things that will help you in the world. This is a doll from far-off Russia-land and this is my mother's blessing," and here she put her hand on Wassilissa's head, "which my mother gave me and her mother gave her, back to the time of the first mother."

And then her mother lay down and died and Wassilissa cried and cried.

After a long time and when it was very dark the Beautiful Wassilissa's father came home from the forest of skyrises and he brought a new wife, a widow who had two daughters. The Beautiful Wassilissa's father only had eyes for his new wife, so the Beautiful Wassilissa had to drag her mother's body into the backyard to bury it. She had to work hard all night and got no sleep.

THE BEAUTIFUL WASSILISSA

It's always been a relief to know that most fairy tales take place far away. But this one is right on our doorsteps — or in our living rooms.

BY DON WEBB

Illustration by Annie Lunsford



The stepmother and her two daughters were very mean to Wassilissa. They made fun of the way she talked, and the way she played, and the way she thought. And when they found out that "Wassilissa" means "queen" in the far-off Russia-land, they teased her terribly. "Little Queen, do this," they'd say, "Little Queen do that." And when the Beautiful Wassilissa's father was away too long, the stepmother would drink too much and beat the Beautiful Wassilissa or lock her into the closet.

It was a prosperous time in the forest of skyrises and the Beautiful Wassilissa's father kept going farther away and higher up. And one day he went so far away and so high up that he never came back. The stepmother and her two daughters wanted to move away. So she read the newspaper and her hands turned black as ink. The Beautiful Wassilissa said goodbye to her mother's grave, and her doll from far-off Russia-land told her to be brave and say her prayers. Well, the stepmother found a house in a wild, dark place which she liked mainly because it was near the hut of the Baba-Yaga. The stepmother knew that if the Baba-Yaga found anyone in the woods she would snatch them up and eat them like a chicken. And the stepmother hoped very much that the Beautiful Wassilissa would stray into the path of the Baba-Yaga so there would be one less mouth to feed.

Now their single-wide was in a dark, wild place and all the light they had came from candles. The stepmother made all the girls work ceaselessly on weaving so they would have enough money. One day as she left for work she gave the three girls green candles. Thick, long candles for her daughters and a short, thin candle for Wassilissa. Soon Wassilissa's candle had burned away. She continued to weave by the light of her sisters' candles, but her eyes hurt. As the Beautiful Wassilissa bent close to her weaving, the wicked sisters blew out their candles.

"O little Queen," they said. "Our candles have caught darkness from your candle. Quickly go to the hut of the Baba-Yaga and bring us back fire so we can finish our weaving." They pushed the Beautiful Wassilissa out the door and locked it behind her. Wassilissa pulled her doll from her pocket. The doll told her to be brave and say her prayers and everything would be all right. So Wassilissa set off through the forest dark.

She had been away from her home no time when a biker thundered by. Now this biker was dressed all in white leather, and his beard was pure white; and as he passed Wassilissa, it suddenly was day. And she went on through the woods. Then a second biker thundered by and he was dressed all in red leather and his beard was blood red. And as he passed Wassilissa, suddenly the red sun was in the sky. And she went on through the woods until she came to the hut of the Baba-Yaga.

Now the Baba-Yaga didn't live in an ordinary house — as you may well imagine. It was an eight-sided hut made of timber and grimy stone. It had a thatched roof, and an ever-smoking chimney, and a tiny green window so dirty that no one could see through it. It had a tiny arched doorway that you could crawl in and out of. But most amazingly it wasn't on the ground! It stood on a pair of long scaly chicken legs. It hopped and whirled around on the chicken legs. Wassilissa could imagine that the Baba-Yaga was in a very bad temper because her house was never still.

So Wassilissa walked up to the gate of the Baba-Yaga's yard. Now the Baba-Yaga didn't have an ordinary gate or an ordinary yard — as you may well imagine. No green thing grew in her yard. It was all black cinders and white splinters of bone and great red worms that left slimy trails. And her fence was all made of bones, and instead of fence posts there were skulls atop long bones. And the skulls watched little Wassilissa as she walked up to the gate.

The lock of the gate was a jawbone from which all the teeth had been pulled. As Wassilissa put out her hand to knock on the gruesome gate, a third biker thundered by and Wassilissa had to jump back so she wouldn't be crushed. The third rider was dressed all in black leather and had a long black beard. He was smiling and his teeth were black as coal. And as he passed little Wassilissa, it suddenly became night.

But it wasn't dark for long for fire began to burn in each of the skulls. Light came out of the eyes and it was bright as day. Little Wassilissa stood up and returned to the gate and she saw that the worms too glowed and the Baba-Yaga's yard was as bright as the full moon in the woods. So Wassilissa knocked on the gruesome gate, and the gate swung open; and the hut stopped dancing about the yard. Its great chicken legs bent at the knee and soon it was sitting on the ground like an ordinary house. Its tiny door opened and the Baba-Yaga stepped out. The Baba-Yaga would be very tall if she weren't so bent and her nose would be very long if it weren't so crooked and her long hair would be very beautiful if it wasn't matted with filth and spiders. And the Baba-Yaga said, "Something stinks out here. What do you want?"

The Beautiful Wassilissa said, "Please, Grandmother, I have come to borrow some fire."

And the Baba-Yaga said, "Come into my hut and if you are very good and do everything I say, I will give you what you want, but if you do not I will eat you."

This was fair.

Inside the hut was much, much bigger than outside. Everything was covered with clotted blood and cinders. Bones of little children lay on the table and a big fire roared in the fireplace. The Baba-Yaga was very ugly and her skin was very, very wrinkled. She was so wrinkled that she looked like moss on a rock and if she kept very still you could mistake her for a mossy rock and come too close. Her fingernails were long and black and hard; and they were filled with dried blood and hair and bits of skin. Little Wassilissa had never seen anything so filthy. There were all different colors in the Baba-Yaga's wrinkles. She had the colors of the rainbow but they were mixed with black: red-black, orange-black, yellow-black, green-black, blue-black, indigo-black, and violet-black. Just being in the hut made the Beautiful Wassilissa want to wash and wash and wash.

The Baba-Yaga told Wassilissa to clean the floor and set the table and make the dinner and separate the moldy corn kernels from the clean corn kernels. And to do all of this before morning when the Baba-Yaga would return. Then the Baba-Yaga stepped into a big iron cauldron and began to push herself along the floor with a broom. She pushed herself out the tiny door and the Beautiful Wassilissa began to cry. She would never be able to do all these things. Her tears ran down her face and went plop plop on the cinder-covered table.

Then the Beautiful Wassilissa remembered the doll. She pulled the doll from her pocket and asked it what to do. The doll rocked from side to side and split across the middle. The top of the doll and the bottom of the doll rolled to one side and came together. Inside the doll was another doll and this doll began to rock from side to side and split across the middle and inside this doll was another doll. And this went on and on until the Beautiful Wassilissa was surrounded by nine dolls each smaller than the last. For this is the way they make dolls in the far-off Russia-land.

Wassilissa and the nine dolls began to work very hard. And with ten people working they cleaned the floor and set the table, made the dinner and separated the clean corn kernels from the moldy corn kernels. They worked all night and very hard. And when they heard the swish swish of the Baba-Yaga's broom the littlest doll jumped into the next biggest doll and that doll jumped into the next doll and so on until all the dolls were inside the biggest doll, and little Wassilissa put that doll in her pocket. As the Baba-Yaga pushed her cauldron into the hut, Wassilissa pretended to put the last clean kernel of corn in the last of the three bowls full of clean corn.

The Baba-Yaga was very surprised that such a little girl could have done so much. She inspected the floor and checked the table and ate up the dinner so the little Wassilissa didn't have any and checked each grain of corn. Then the Baba-Yaga whistled and three pairs of skeleton hands appeared and carried the bowls of corn away. Then the Baba-Yaga lay down on the floor and fell asleep. The little Wassilissa ran to the door, but it would not open. So she ran to the dirty green windowpane and cleaned a tiny spot with her tears. She saw that the hut was dancing. It made her feel sick to

watch the world outside jump up and down so. But it felt still within the hut. And the Beautiful Wassilissa lay down in that still, dark place and went to sleep.

It seemed no time that the Baba-Yaga was shaking her. "Wake up, little girl, wake up. I don't know how you did everything I set for you to do last night, but this night you must do all those things and sort my poppy seeds." And the Baba-Yaga showed her a hill of poppy seeds twice as tall as Wassilissa. And Wassilissa looked around the hut and discovered that the Baba-Yaga must have been eating little children while she slept, for it was twice as filthy as before with drying blood and gritty ash.

Then the Baba-Yaga climbed into her cauldron and pushed herself through the tiny door with her broom. And the little Wassilissa cried and cried for last night she had barely gotten all the work done with the nine magic dolls and tonight she would have to sort the good poppy seeds from the hollow ones. But you can't get through life by crying, so Wassilissa took the doll from her pocket.

The doll rocked and split, rocked and split, rocked and split until the nine dolls surrounded Wassilissa. And Wassilissa told them all the things that had happened. Then a wondrous thing happened. The littlest doll began to rock back and forth and to and fro with all her might. Wassilissa and the other dolls watched this dance wide-eyed. Finally the littlest doll split open and what do you think came forth? Not another doll, but a great wind. The wind rushed around the hut ruffling the sticky tablecloth, playing with the raging fire. Finally it hit the hill of poppy seeds. It picked up all the hollow poppy seeds and threw them to its friend the fire. Then the wind flew up the chimney to play in the wide world.

The littlest doll came together, but she was too tired to do any work that night. So Wassilissa and the eight other dolls worked twice as hard cleaning the floor and setting the table, making the dinner and separating the clean corn kernels from the moldy corn kernels. And before long they heard the swish swish of the Baba-Yaga's broom. The dolls jumped one inside the other and the biggest doll jumped into Wassilissa's pocket. Wassilissa pretended to be putting the last good poppy seed into the sack of good seeds as the Baba-Yaga pushed herself through the tiny door with her broom.

Then the Beautiful Wassilissa pulled the doll from her pocket and asked it what to do. The doll rocked from side to side and split across the middle.

The Baba-Yaga inspected all the things that she had inspected before. Then she asked Wassilissa, "What did you do with the hollow seeds?"

"I fed them to the fire."

"Fire, did you eat all the hollow seeds?"

And the fire answered with a voice full of sparks, "All the hollow seeds I ate and not one full one."

Then the Baba-Yaga whistled and three pairs of skeleton hands appeared and squeezed the poppy seeds into oil. Then the Baba-Yaga lay down and Wassilissa lay down.

It seemed that as soon as she closed her eyes the Baba-Yaga was shaking her.

"Wake up, little girl, wake up. Tell me how you did all these things."

"Before I tell you how I did all these things, may I ask you a few questions?"

"Ask what you will, but be careful because to know too much makes you old."

"When I was walking to your hut, I was passed by a white biker. Who was he?"

"He is my bright one. He is called day."

"Then I was passed by a red biker. Who was he?"

"He is my second son. He is called the sun."

"Then I was passed by a biker all in black. Who was he?"

"He is my dearest of all. He is called night."

Wassilissa thought about this and the Baba-Yaga said, "Do you have any more questions for me?"

Wassilissa thought about the three pairs of skeleton hands. She started to ask the Baba-Yaga, but decided that she didn't want to become old just yet; so she was silent.

The Baba-Yaga said, "It is good that you didn't ask about the things inside for it is bad to carry dirt outside the hut. Now you must tell me how you did all those things."

Wassilissa said, "I was able to do all these things because of my mother's blessing." She did not mention the magic doll, because she knew the Baba-Yaga would take it away from her.

"A blessing! I knew I smelled something foul in my house. Take your blessing and leave. I don't want your stinking blessing!"

The tiny door swung open and Wassilissa ran out. The Baba-Yaga ran after her. When they got to the gate the Baba-Yaga picked one of the flame-eyed skulls from the fence. She handed it to Wassilissa.

"This is fire. Take it to your sisters."

Wassilissa took the skull and with its light found her way through the forest dark.

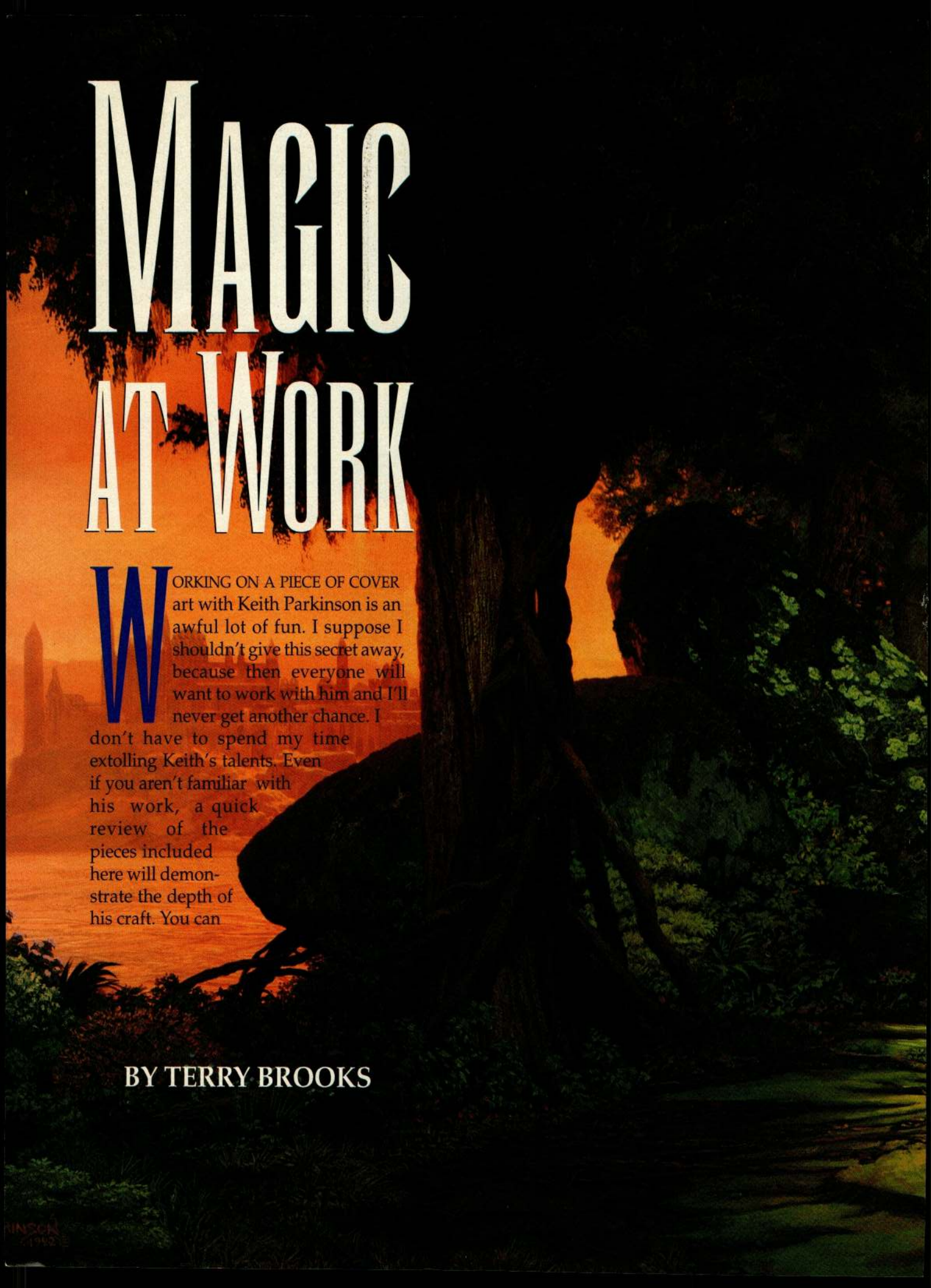
There was a party going on in the trailer. Wassilissa's stepmother and her two sisters were happy because they thought that the Baba-Yaga had eaten the Beautiful Wassilissa. When they saw Wassilissa they were afraid and they were more afraid of the skull she carried.

"What is that?" they asked.

"It's the fire you sent me to fetch," said Wassilissa, and she placed the skull next to the punch bowl and went to bed for she was very tired. All night long the stepmother and her two daughters tried to hide from the skull. They hid behind chairs and in closets and behind one another; but the eyes of the skull would find them.

When Wassilissa woke the next morning she found that her stepmother and her two sisters were burned away. She took the black from their ashes and rubbed it into her hair, and everyone said thereafter that no one had blacker hair than the Beautiful Wassilissa. She took the skull and rubbed it on her skin, and everyone said thereafter that no one had whiter skin than the Beautiful Wassilissa. She took the fire from the skull's eyes and rubbed it on her lips, and everyone said thereafter that no one had redder or hotter lips than the Beautiful Wassilissa. Then she locked up the trailer and buried the skull and went off toward the forest of skyrises where her beauty would be of great value, and she never, never in her happy long life that followed, forgot the grandmotherly kindness of the Baba-Yaga. ❧

MAGIC AT WORK

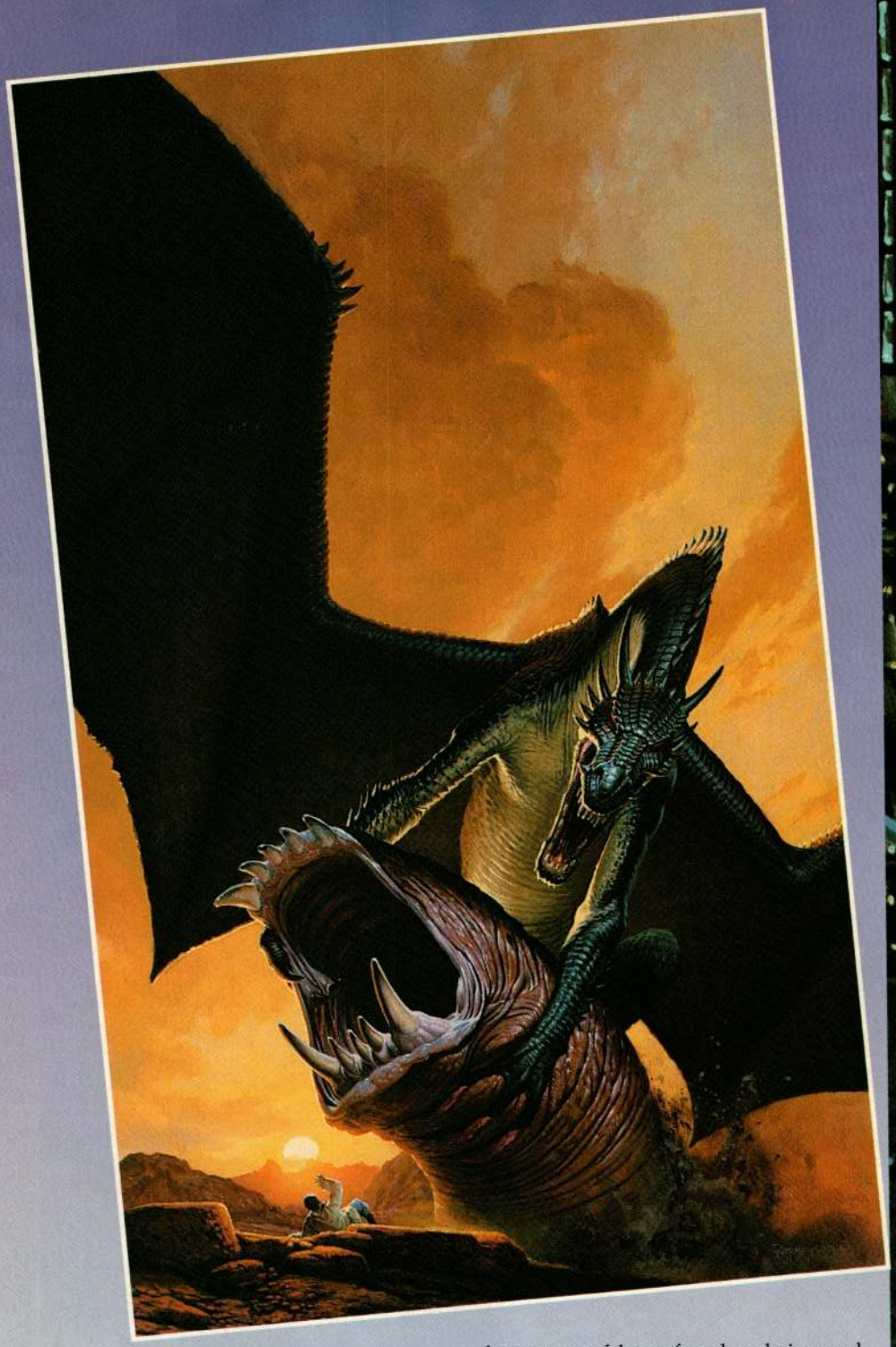


WORKING ON A PIECE OF COVER art with Keith Parkinson is an awful lot of fun. I suppose I shouldn't give this secret away, because then everyone will want to work with him and I'll never get another chance. I don't have to spend my time extolling Keith's talents. Even if you aren't familiar with his work, a quick review of the pieces included here will demonstrate the depth of his craft. You can

BY TERRY BROOKS



"Painting the dragon in this piece was a bigger challenge than I expected it to be," said the artist about the cover to the Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman novel Hand of Chaos.





ABOVE: Keith Parkinson's cover for Terry Brook's novel Witches Brew, *published by del Rey, deftly illuminates the artist's brilliant imagination. RIGHT: Always meticulous, the artist spent over two and a half days on the composition of this cover to David Eddings' novel* Sapphire Rose.

glance at any of the proferred renderings and instantly know something valid and insightful about the scene or the characters whether or not you have read the book. Keith is particularly good at conveying a sense of movement, of revealing a momentary tension, of capturing a fleeting passion. He sets mood and point of view as skillfully as he chooses colors and renders depth. But it is the way that he goes about doing all this that makes working with him such fun.

We have done seven book covers together, five from *Shannara* and three from *Magic Kingdom*, so we go back to the late 1980s professionally. He is a longtime fan of the science fiction and fantasy field and is well read. He is familiar with the writers and their work; he





has a strong sense of what appeals to a reader visually. It helps when the artist knows what you are trying to do without your having to explain it to him. It helps that he reads your work. So with Keith it always begins the same way. He reads a copy of the manuscript to get a feel for the story and a sense of which scenes might work best as cover art. My editor and I submit suggestions for his consideration. Keith produces a series of pen and ink sketches. We get on the phone, in pairs and then maybe all three of us together, to discuss what we think works or doesn't. Maybe another sketch is added. Maybe one of the originals is altered — the position of a character is changed, part of a setting is expanded, or the action is tightened. Finally, a choice is made from the sketches under consideration, and Keith sits down to render a completed version of the artwork.

Doesn't sound like all that much fun, you say? Try living with a cover that doesn't have the first thing to do with the content of your book. Try working with an artist who doesn't read your work at all, isn't interested in preserving the integrity of your vision, and has taken on the assignment mostly for the purpose of collecting a check. That's the way it often was in the old days, when there was less active collaboration between writers and cover artists and less interest in tying the book cover to the storyline. Maybe some of you have had this experience or heard about writers who have. Working with Keith is not like that. He makes the creative experience something to look forward to.

I'll give you an example. While creating the cover art for *First King of Shannara*, Owen Lock (my editor), Keith, and I talked to one another in several phone conversations regarding various possibilities. Owen felt strongly about a scene at the Hadeshorn involving the Druid Bremen and the shades of Druids gone. I told him I didn't like the idea. I had another scene in mind and thought mine was a stronger choice. Nevertheless, in the spirit of author-editor cooperation, we agreed to suggest the idea to Keith. Keith, on hearing the idea, said he didn't know if it could be done in the right way, but he would think about it. Time passed. Owen and I lost interest and began to look for something else. Next thing you know, here come the preliminary sketches, and there, tucked among several others and clearly the best of the lot, is the very scene Owen and I had given up on. Keith had come up with a way to do it after all, and do it well, relying upon his own artistic vision and instincts to get the job done.

Keith has always been very good at surprising me with his interpretations. The cover of *The Druid of Shannara* is a case in point. It has a lush and tragic quality to it, as if it belonged as much on a Romance as on a Fantasy. The cover to C.J. Cherryh's book, *Chernavog*, has something of this same feel. Both covers are static, but deep; you can feel the pain and the loss that infuses the story, even without knowing the story itself. The cover to *Druid* was viewed by many of its readers as being against type — but intriguingly so. It was not a cover I would ever have imagined as a possibility. Keith did.

Keith Parkinson lives with his wife and two sons in a part of Pennsylvania that is somewhat off the beaten track. He does his work at Knightsbridge Studios, which is not nearly as grand as it sounds, thank goodness, but is situated in some really beautiful and evocative countryside. I've said before that I think much of Keith's work is inspired by where he lives. It is lovely there, but it can be quite mysterious, too. It suggests what might be as much as it reveals what is. It would not surprise me at all to discover that it is populated by fairy creatures and maybe even a dragon or two. It would not surprise me to discover that magic is at work.

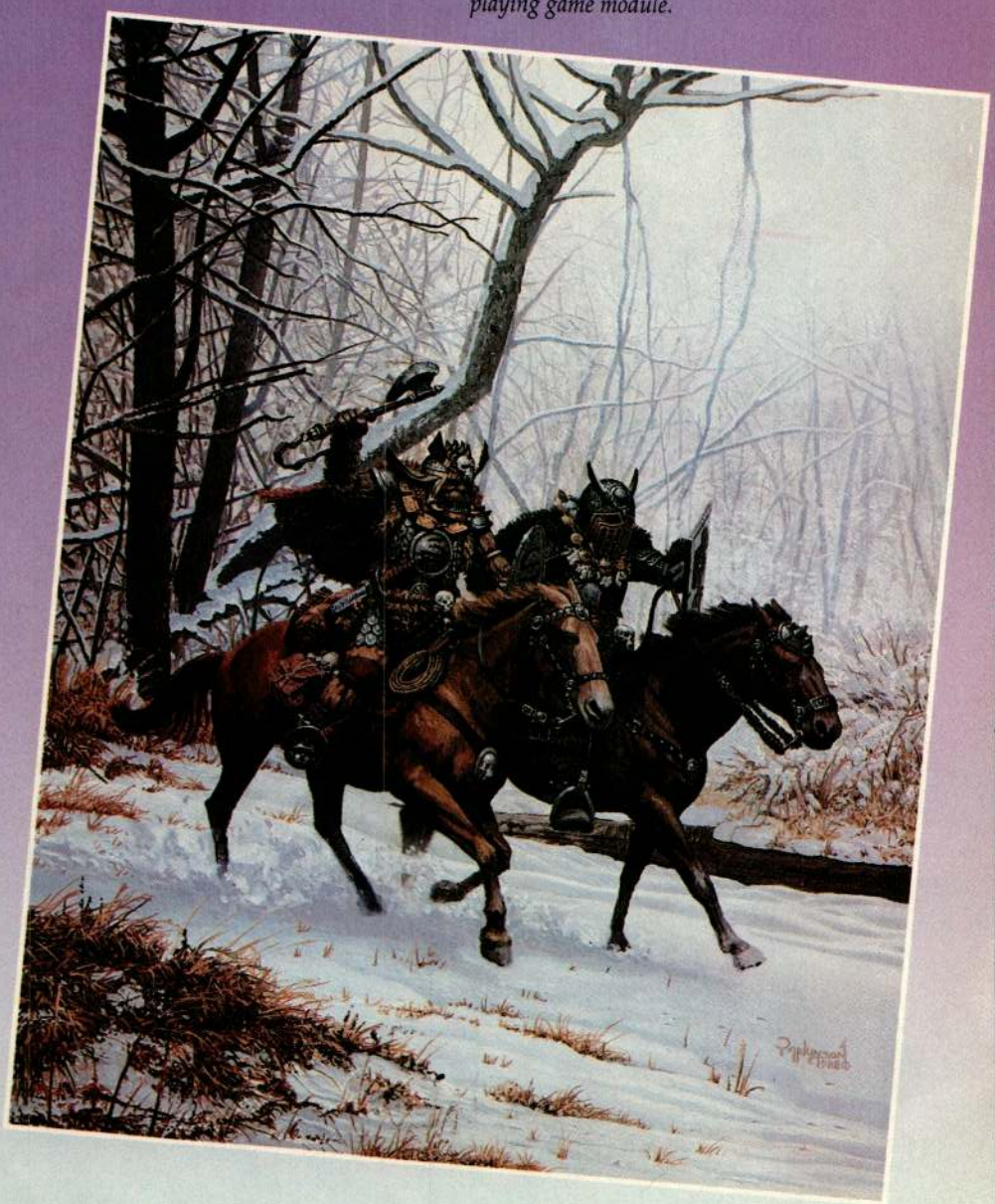
But, then, where the art of Keith Parkinson is concerned, there is always magic at work, isn't there?

A final note. Keith has just completed work on a new art book scheduled for release this fall. The title of the book is *Knightsbridge: The Art of Keith Parkinson*. Check it out. If your response is anything like mine, you will probably end up adding it to your collection.



A pivotal moment in Keith's art career occurred during his senior year in high school. Having fallen away from artistic pursuits for several years in favor of sports, he was persuaded to take a college credit art course by teacher Bruce Rae. After completion of a general curriculum during the first half of the year-long course, each student was required to select and focus on a particular art form. Bruce suggested that Keith should consider fantasy art. To demonstrate what he was talking about, he introduced Keith to the work of the legendary Frank Frazetta. A contest ensued. Teacher and student would pool their spending money to buy one of Frazetta's art books. Then each would complete a painting in the fantasy form, and the winner would get to keep the book. Keith remembers that Bruce Rae took time out of his own schedule after school and on weekends to engage in the contest. When teacher and student were done, Keith was declared the winner. He realizes now he won a whole lot more than just a book.

LEFT: Judith Tarr is yet another fantasy master whose novels have been graced by Parkinson's magic, as with this cover to her Ars Magica. BELOW: *Orcs in the Snow was intended to be a cover painting for a magazine that instead folded, and so made its first public appearance as the cover of a Palladium role playing game module.*




HOT DEATH ON WHEELS

HOT DEATH ON WHEELS

You go down to that crossroads, you just know who you're gonna find. But will he be playing guitar or gunning an engine?

BY GEOFFREY A. LANDIS

Illustration by Mike Wright

CARS TODAY, THEY'RE NOTHING, kid; crappy little Detroit shitboxes stamped out of sheet metal. A waste of your fuckin' money and so full of electronic crap that you can't even tune 'em up without a fuckin' computer.

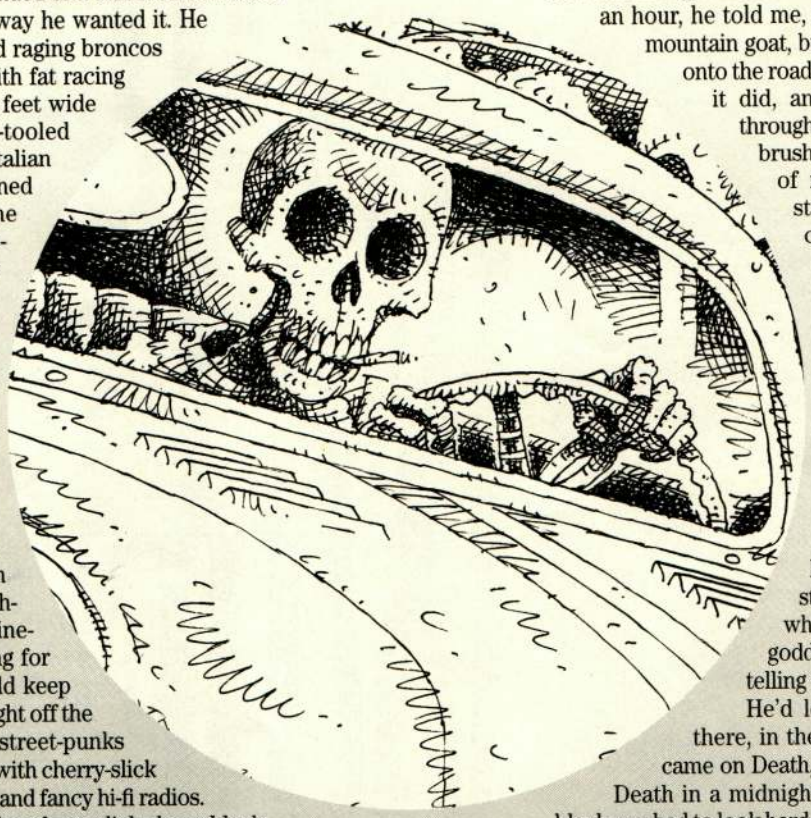
You like that one? Pretty, you say? Let me tell you, you couldn't afford it, not that one. Not for sale, anyway.

Let me tell you about cars, kid, about *real* cars. I was a kid too, once. Yeah, that was a while back, more miles than I care to remember. Used to tag along behind the greasers. A grease-monkey wannabe, me, hair slicked back with Bryl Creem and snot dripping out my nose and thought I knew something about cars. Nah, I didn't know nothing back then, but Den Tolbert, he tolerated me trailing around behind him, sometimes even let me hold a wrench for him while he worked on his streetrod, let me feel like I was part of it, something special.

That night was hot, the wind blowing down from the desert like the devil had forgotten to close the gates of Hell.

Never heard of him? Kid, I'm not surprised, you wouldn't. But believe you me, he was the best there was, maybe the best there ever was. He was a T-shirt grease-punk back when the word punk meant something, not like those fags today who think they're something because they got a staple through their face. Not that anybody — *anybody* — would have called him a punk to his face, no sir.

Den had a '57 Chevy, just like that one. The finest car ever made, my opinion. He'd crammed a Cadillac flathead V-8 in it, the one that, back then, they made special only for ambulances. He took it apart and rebuilt it, the engine bored and stroked and milled and ported and polished, every cam sanded and shined and rubbed and put back together the way he wanted it. He had damn near five hundred raging broncos chained under the hood, with fat racing slicks of Pirelli rubber two feet wide in back, and custom hand-tooled air shocks he took off an Italian racer that crashed and burned off Topanga Canyon one misty morning; some asshole who had the bright idea that 'cause he could afford a pretty car, he knew how to drive it.



Den's rod had chrome so bright your eyes hurt to look at it; rubber so hot it left sooty flames on the asphalt five hundred feet behind where he'd been, twin quad-barrel carbs and a tuned exhaust that let him do zero to one-eighty in nothing flat. He spent weeks fine-tuning just the aero, looking for that perfect edge that would keep the rear end from floating right off the street at top speed. Other street-punks had their cars all dolled up, with cherry-slick enamel and white-wall tires and fancy hi-fi radios. Except for the chrome, Den's rod was slick glossy black with only a white skull on the hood and the words *Hot Death on Wheels*. He didn't have nothing inside, not even a tach, because he knew every quaver of his engine and could always tell just exactly what he was doing by the sound.

He left behind everything on the road. He didn't even *have* a rear-view mirror because nobody ever came up behind him, no baby, not even once.

One summer night the hot wind was blowing out of the mountains, and he'd beat everything on the road, no contest. We'd gone to the drive-in, where all the street-punks would hang out in the back row, smoking Luckys, making a great show of ignoring the girls, and arranging races. But nobody would race with Den; they'd all been beaten so bad that they wouldn't even look him in the eye, just stood there pretending they couldn't see him.

That night was hot, the wind blowing down from the desert like the devil had forgotten to close the gates of Hell. Den stared down the other drivers contemptuously, not saying a word, then he threw down his cigarette and just got in his car and gunned it. Rev up a car like his and you can feel it as much as you hear it, thunder like to shake you to pieces. He took off, out into the mountains, screeching wheels like a coyote gone mad and leaving us all behind in a cloud of burnt rubber and gas fumes.

I heard the story later, in bits and pieces. I believed it then, and, all these years and too many miles later, I goddamn still believe every word of it now.

He went through the mountains at about a hundred miles an hour, he told me, twisting and turning like a mountain goat, but he'd built that car to hold onto the road no matter what, and by God it did, and he headed straight out through the desert, cactus, and sage-brush and then a thousand miles of nothing but darkness and stars, nothing else, not even cows, not even cactus.

He'd left California so far behind in the night, with the hot wind razor-whipping past him, that he could be in Arizona, or even Kansas, but the roads were wide and straight and empty and just made for street racing.

And then — this is the part you might not believe, kid, but I swear I heard it straight, and he wasn't smiling when he said it; so laugh and I'll goddamn knock your teeth in, I'm telling you.

He'd left everything behind, and there, in the last hour before dawn, he came on Death, waiting for him in the road; Death in a midnight black coupe, paint so flat black you had to look hard to see it was even there at all. Death had the face of a skull; grinning, of course, but there wasn't any humor in that grin, none, and wearing a dirty T-shirt with a pack of Camels rolled up in a sleeve that just hung there, flapping limp on the bones. Den recognized that gleaming skull instantly, he'd seen it a thousand times, seen it even in his dreams: it was painted on the hood of his rod. The car, though, the midnight coupe, was a make that he couldn't quite recognize, and that right there was more than a little odd, 'cause Den knew the lines of every car ever built.

And when he saw Death waiting for him, just grinning and smoking and waiting by his car, he knew that he'd ridden so fast he'd left behind Nevada, and Wyoming, and even goddamn Iowa, and had left the roads of the living so far behind that the only way he would ever get back was to run this race, this last race, and by God win it.

But he'd been looking for a race, spoiling for one, and if it was

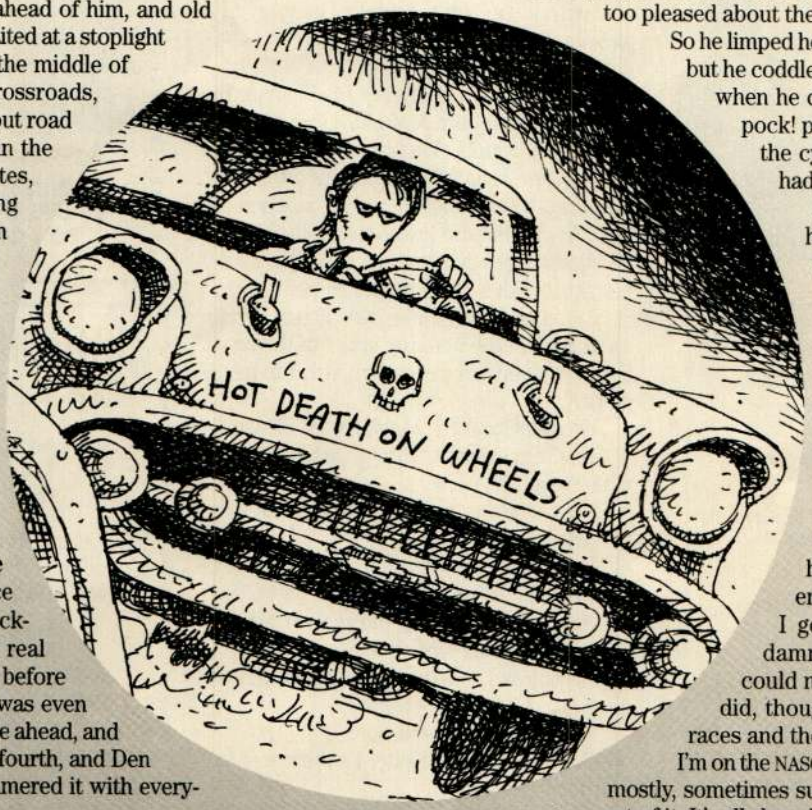
His engine was overheating bad, flames licking out the side of the hood, and the road got narrow and went on a curve ...

Death, why then, he'd goddamn race Death, and win, too; he wasn't about to lose to *anybody*, not Death, not anybody.

And Death only grinned and beckoned with one finger.

He probably should have stopped and checked his car, let his oil cool a little, taken a look at the wedges he had on his springs, scoped things out. But that's something that you just don't do, kid, you never shut the motor when the adrenaline is pumping. And we'd had that car apart just last week tweaking it up — him tweaking it up, that is, me handing him wrenches — and it was running as sweet as we'd ever gotten it, smoother than twenty-dollar whisky and rattlesnake-fast. And, besides, he was spoiling for a race.

So he waved Death on ahead of him, and old skull-face pulled up and waited at a stoplight — a stoplight right out in the middle of nowhere, not even at a crossroads, just a light. Nothing there but road and starlight, and maybe in the way distance two tall buttes, with the road disappearing between them. So Den pulled up beside him, both of them racing their engines, both of them smiling like rabid coons, and then the light turned green, and he popped the clutch and they were gone.



And Death's car was fast, scary fast, faster than any car Den had ever seen, and in that first instant he knew that every other race he'd ever run was just chicken-shit, but this was the real thing. They'd hit a hundred before you could spit, and Death was even with him, maybe even a little ahead, and then they both shifted into fourth, and Den put his foot down and hammered it with everything he had.

He was neck and neck with Death, but his engine was running way hot; it had been a hot night to start with and he'd picked up a lot of dirt from going too damn fast on some rotten unpaved desert road and the dirt was stopping up his radiator. And now his engine was overheating bad, flames licking out the side of the hood, and the road got narrow and went on a curve between the two looming buttes. He took the inside of the curve and right then he blew a spark plug — *bam!* — like a rifle-shot, right through the side of the hood and he knew he wasn't going to make it. Death started to draw ahead, he could see the grinning skull in the window inches away, and as the midnight coupe pulled ahead he saw something he should've noticed right off: He realized that Death's car had no aero, it was all muscle with no finesse, and most particularly, with no down-force to hold the rear end to the road. It was built for the straightaway. So Den, he just tapped the wheel, just a little bit, and holding his car in to the curve with all the force he could muster he nudged Death's rear end, and Death's midnight-black coupe broke free of the road and spun out. And behind him — he took a quick look around as he passed — behind him he saw a huge cloud of dust, and two wheels off that midnight coupe came flying through the air, bouncing and spinning, and one of them came right over his car, a few inches over his head, and spanged down in the road ahead of him, and he didn't stop, didn't even slow down, just dodged onto the dirt and held the car steady and ran. One thing he wasn't ever going to do was stop, not then, not until he was a thousand miles away. He knew, he just knew, that old skull-face wasn't going to be too pleased about the race.

So he limped home, firing on seven cylinders, but he coddled it and nursed it and coasted when he could, the engine going pock! pock! pock! with the air sucking into the cylinder where the spark-plug had blown, but he made it back.

After that the fire went out of him; he settled down, got married, sold the car, and got a full-time job. Last I heard, he's selling insurance, and doing pretty well for himself at it, too. Says he doesn't regret getting out. You can cheat Death once, he told me, and once is enough.

Me? Yeah, you're right, it was me bought the car off him. I had to scrap the engine; put in a Pontiac engine I got off a wreck and rebuilt damn near from scratch, but I could never make it run the way he did, though I won my share of street races and then some.

I'm on the NASCAR circuit now, doing engines mostly, sometimes suspensions, but the heart has gone out of it. It's all show-biz now, commercials for soft drinks and Virginia Slims and last I heard even a goddamn cosmetics company. I think maybe it's time for me to settle down too.

Yeah, kid, that there's the car. Pretty, you say. I detailed it myself, wouldn't let anybody else touch this one. But no, I'm not about to sell. You couldn't afford it, kid, and I'm not talking about money, neither.

No, I don't race, myself. I never take that car out any more, except maybe once a year or so, and then only in midday; run it up and down the street once or twice to remember old times, to remember what a real car feels like. Because I know that Death is still out there, still cruising somewhere in a midnight coupe so black that you have to look hard to see it's even there at all, cruising and looking and looking and cruising, just looking to find that one car, the one that, long ago, had the hood that says *Hot Death on Wheels*.

And this time, I don't reckon he's fixing to lose. ❧

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NAIRICH

Continued from page 53

Captain MacGrewar vanished and she knew she lay awake in the dark.

Charlotte quickly slipped on her black trousers and blouse. Barefoot, she ran to see to Mrs. MacGrewar. Before she reached the stairs, however, she saw a faint glow of firelight from the parlor.

Mrs. MacGrewar reclined on her Roman divan, staring into the dying fire. Pictures and knickknacks lay scattered and broken on the floor. The clock had fallen to the hearth, its crystal broken; the hands read "5:12."

"Mrs. MacGrewar? Are you hurt?"

Mrs. MacGrewar slowly lifted her tumbler of Drambuie and sipped it.

Charlotte smelled gas, and heard it hissing from a broken pipe somewhere. "Mrs. MacGrewar, we have to leave right away. I've seen fires in Chinatown after earthquakes, and those quakes were smaller than this."

"I will stay in Nairich where I belong." She gazed into the flames.

"But — the gas is leaking!"

"I see Dugald's ghost because I share his guilt — I drove him to make more money." Her voice lowered. "He was not an evil man."

Charlotte twisted her fingers anxiously, desperate to leave before the gas reached the fire. "My father and Law Mok stole his body and had it thrown into the ocean. That's why his ghost walks. Now please come."

"I ha'e seen no ghosts. Guilt has driven me mad, not the walking spirit of the dead. Dugald sleeps in peace beneath his headstone."

"We must go, Mrs. MacGrewar. Please."

"You never saw any ghost, did you, Charlotte?"

"No, ma'am — but I dreamed about Captain MacGrewar tonight."

"Eh? What did you see?" Mrs. MacGrewar's deep-set eyes looked up.

"He pointed toward the rear of Nairich before the 'quake woke me."

"He pointed to where he sleeps. He doesnae walk. Go now."

"I can't just leave you here."

"Go on, now, Charlotte. Leave me to my Nairich."

"*Please* come." Charlotte smelled the gas more strongly than before.

"Did I ever tell you, Charlotte?" Mrs. MacGrewar looked back into the dwindling fire. "Nairich means 'shame' in Gaelic."

Suddenly an aftershock rocked the floor beneath Charlotte's feet; she tumbled to the carpet as more crockery smashed to the floor around her. The Roman divan tilted over with a thump. Terrified for Mrs. MacGrewar, Charlotte looked up.

In the air above the fallen divan, Mrs. MacGrewar floated in her reclining position, her face weary and sad.

Charlotte stared, uncomprehending.

Slowly, Mrs. MacGrewar's form sank


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downward until she rested on the carpet before the fire.

Charlotte stared at her, suddenly remembering how Mrs. MacGrew- ar's steps never made a sound on the hardwood floors.

"Goodbye, Charlotte."

Panicked and confused, Charlotte got up and ran for her room. She slipped on her shoes and snatched up her mother's coat. Flinging it on, she hurried out the side entrance into the cold.

The smell of smoke struck her. She could see flames up on Telegraph Hill, sending black clouds into the sunrise. Holding the loose coat tightly, she hurried down the side of Nairich to the rear yard, where tall oak trees shadowed the ground. Firebells clanged in the distance.

Charlotte had never come to the back yard during the few days she had lived here. In the shadows beneath the oak trees, she saw a carved headstone. Her heart pounding, she crept close and read the engraving.

"Captain Dugald MacGrewar
Beloved of Elizabeth
In Nairich for Eternity
1820 - 1886."

Then Charlotte saw another headstone standing next to this one in the shadows. She moved closer, tingling with fear. In the firelit dawn, she looked at the words in matched engraving:

"Elizabeth MacKay MacGrewar
In Nairich with her husband
1831 - 1886."

Charlotte stared at the name and the date of death as the wind rose around her and the smell of smoke grew stronger. The oak trees over her head rustled. She felt a sudden chill.

"Chinatown is burning to the ground," called Law Mok, hurrying up the side of Nairich in his bent, stiff gait. "I whipped my horse all the way here. April 19, 1906, will be remembered with grief in this city."

"The gas is leaking," Charlotte remembered suddenly. "A fire is burning in the fireplace."

"We must take Mrs. MacGrewar, too." Law Mok grasped her arm.

"She's beyond help," Charlotte said softly, allowing Law Mok to hustle her away. "She told me that when her husband jumped, she threw her arms around him but couldn't stop him. I think she must have fallen, too."

Law Mok did not argue. Out on the street, Charlotte climbed into the seat of his laundry wagon. He stepped up after her and whipped his nervous, prancing horse. The wagon jerked forward.

"You and my father took the wrong coffin," Charlotte whispered, looking back at Nairich. "And she doesn't even know she's dead."

As the laundry wagon bounced roughly down the cobbled street, a thunderous explosion blew out the tall front windows in the misshapen parlor of the great mansion, and long, orange flames flickered out.

As smoke billowed into the dawn sky, Charlotte turned her back on Nairich and old Chinatown. ❧

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BY MARK SUMNER

Quake *proves that only the crown prince can replace the king of action games.*

I'VE HEARD IT SAID THAT NO ONE CAN HAVE THE EFFECT ON STORYTELLING THAT Shakespeare once did, simply because Shakespeare already did it.

Good old William S. did not invent the story, or the play. Those came down to him with thousands of years of theory and practice already done. But Shakespeare gave us innovations in plot, in characters, and sheer structure that shaped both plays and other forms of narrative from his day to ours. He so redefined what we expect from a story, that if we get something too different from his broad outline, our Bard-tuned brains are likely to reject it.

In a similar way, the folks down at id Software have redefined a good chunk of the compute-gaming world. Their work has been focused on a certain segment of computer gaming, an area that used to be called "3-D maze games" or "first-person shooters." This type of game is not new. In fact, there were games of this sort going back better than 10 years — including one called *Stalkers* by someone with a name suspiciously like mine. Several of these games were quite good, and some were marvels at milking graphic performance from the sluggish machines of the day. But none of them, mine included, had what it took to become a classic. These first-person games limped along as a marginal, largely-ignored niche.

Then id came out with a game called *Wolfenstein*. It was an instant success. Right away, other companies starting scrambling to capitalize on the incredible success of *Wolf 3-D*. But even while the mania over this game was still ramping up, id raised the ante to a whole new level. It introduced a game called *Doom*.

The success of *Doom* is hard to overstate. Not only did the game sell millions of copies, it revolutionized the idea of who played computer games and where they played them. *Doom* playing was not restricted to teenage geeks squirreled away in a basement. Soon after the game's release, corporations found that their networked systems were being brought to their knees by executives indulging in *Doom* "death matches." *Doom* even showed up on an episode of *ER*. *Doom* spread faster than a computer virus on the planet. *Doom* was cool.

But the best measure of *Doom*'s success is how it has affected the gaming industry. The 3-D maze game might have existed long before id started business, but since *Doom* appeared the industry has been swamped by this style of gaming.

Most telling is the fact that these games are no longer called 3-D maze games or first-person shooters. Now they are called simply "*Doom* clones" — much to the chagrin of the rest of the industry.

You can't be a real player in the gaming business these days without your own take on the *Doom* idea. The first round of *Doom* clones were actually *Wolfenstein* clones. Their "engines" didn't support the range of floor designs and complexity that *Doom* provides. The second batch of clones actually included some quite interesting games.

Interplay's *Descent* had success by adding free movement in all directions. Piloting a spaceship through *Descent*'s twisting passages can be dizzying — if not downright stomach churning. LucasArts traded on the *Star Wars* franchise to power their *Dark Forces* game. Electronic Arts introduced small squad-level tactics in the brilliant (if less than best-selling) *Space Hulk*. None of these programs came anywhere close to causing the fervor of the original.

As other programmers began to decipher the tricks that had leapfrogged id ahead of the pack, their games gradually reached and surpassed *Doom*'s technical achievements. Still, they had trouble taking away the crown. Again and again, companies have taken their shot at introducing a "*Doom* killer," but the king stayed on the throne.

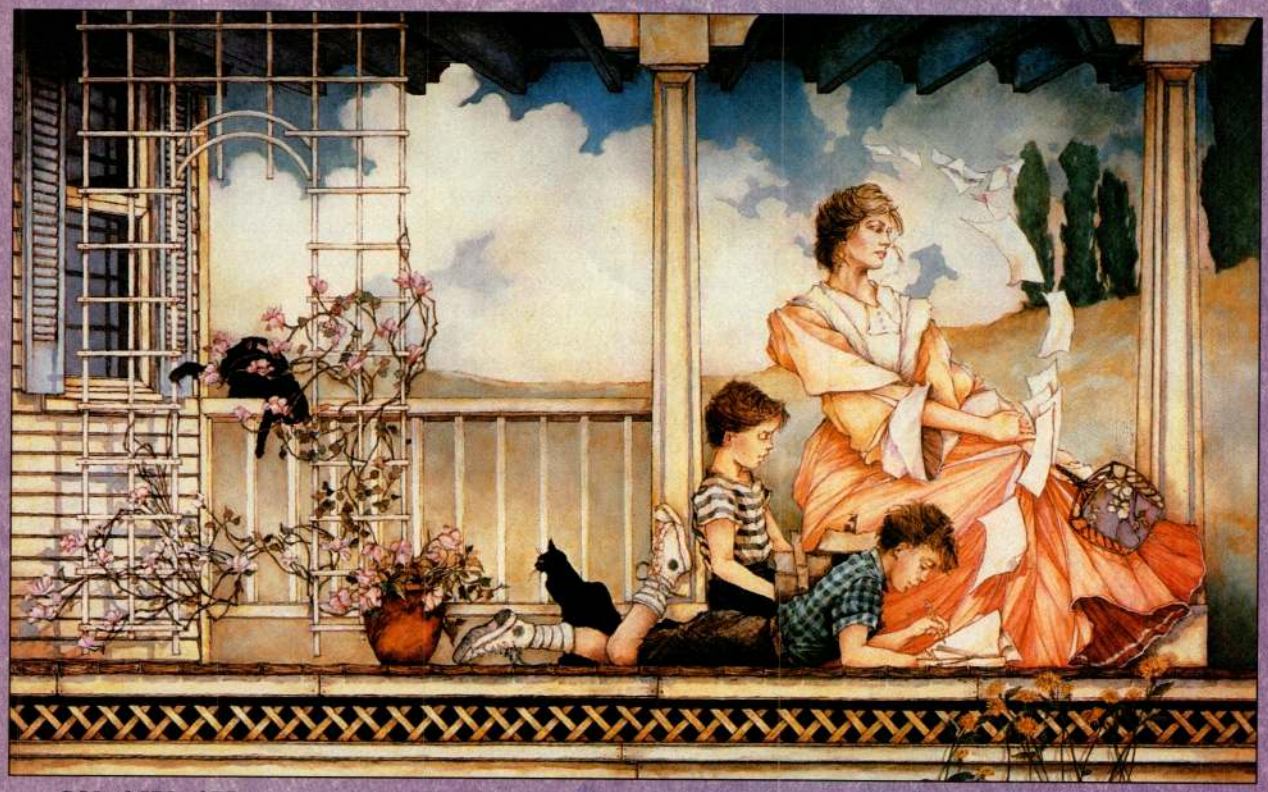
But even the longest reigns have to end sometime. And as so often happens, it's a family member that has succeeded to the crown. *Doom* has now surrendered it's reign to id's latest creation, *Quake*.

Quake is undoubtedly the most anticipated computer



In White Wolf's Mage: The Ascension, *the story* is *the game.*

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game of all time. Dozens, if not hundreds, of Web sites ran ongoing *Quake* watch pages, giving up-to-the-second updates, and waiting for the moment of the game's public release. Every hint of *Quake*'s possible features was scrutinized, every rumor examined with the lust of the Whitewater Committee discovering a new box of bank files.

When a *Quake* death match application was released earlier in the year, there was a general feeling of disappointment. The death match app, which lacked monsters and many expected features, just didn't look much better than *Doom*. It was far short of the quantum leap gamers expected from id. Worry hung like a fog over the Internet.

We shouldn't have worried.

The shareware release of *Quake* is finally here, and it is nothing short of phenomenal. Every feature that made *Doom* a success is improved in this new game. The lighting features have been tremendously enhanced, with deep shadows and flickering flames. Sound, always integral to *Doom*, is even richer here. The creak of opening doors, splash of waterfalls, and growls of unseen enemies lend incredible realism.

The creatures in *Doom* were remarkable in their ability to interact with both the player and each other. They're even better here. In *Quake*, the creatures not only look and sound real, they act real. Sneak up to a corner and watch a couple of demons. Until they see you, they wander about, looking in corners and making an occasional growl. When they run into each other, they may throw a few punches. Stimulate their antagonism with a well-placed shot, and these guys may take each other out for you.

The overall package of sound, graphics, and gameplay gives *Quake* an incredible ambiance. Compared to the best of the "Doom killers," like Formgen's *Duke Nuke'Em*, *Quake* is head and shoulders better.

Some people are bound to be offended, or at least a little miffed, that I dared to compare a shoot 'em up game with the works of the immortal bard. It's true that neither *Quake* nor *Doom* has much of a plot (the same could be said for the books based on *Doom*). You shoot everything that moves, try to stay alive, and collect the items you need to make it to the next level.

Don't forget that computer games are a very young medium. Shakespeare might have shown us the way of narrative, but Will stood on a few thousand years of earlier attempts to produce his works. Those hard-won narrative skills are hard to apply to an interactive story. Computer games have not yet had their Shakespeare, or their Mallory. But *Quake* may show that we're well past Gilgamesh. id, like everyone else in the business, is still searching for the formula that allows them to get maximum emotion across to the gamer. Right now, the emotions relayed are not that complex. When you open that door at the end of level three, you *are* going to have an emotional response. Mine was to scream and run for the hills. *Quake* may not be able to make you weep with joy, but id has sure learned how to make you jump.



Quake *features realistically acting creatures, plus state-of-the-art sound and lighting.*

The only complaint I have about this first release of *Quake* is that it's not long enough. Now we can only look forward to the full commercial release to shake up the racks of computer stores everywhere. When it does arrive, you can bet network administrators will be Quaking in their boots.

White Wolf Rewrites the Book of Magick

I have another of those horrible confessions to make. I'm a skeptic. I do not believe in ghouls, ghosts, goblins, the Loch Ness Monster, full trance mediums, or the theory of Atlantis. On the Mulder-Scully scale of skepticism ... well, I think Scully's a little too easy to convince.

But, to quote a famous poster, I want to believe. And after reading White Wolf's latest role-playing manual, *Mage: The Ascension*, I really, *really* want to believe in magic.

Actually, *Mage* is about "magick." This spelling is much in vogue to differentiate between things paranormal and the sort of things performed by a guy in a silk hat.

Mage is an addition to White Wolf's role-playing system that already includes rules for vampires, werewolves, and other arcane critters. This time, they've introduced a complement of secret magickal societies to match the tribes of earlier games. Characters and situations created in *Mage* can be played alone, or in combination with White Wolf's other games. Either way, it's one of the most enjoyable role-playing games to come along in years.



The variety of magick societies presented gives a great range of play. No matter what type of magick, technomagick, or paranormal abilities grab your attention, you'll find a group to catch your interest. Although players of White Wolf's other titles may find these archetypes a little familiar, it's worth running through the list to see what niches are available.

First up is the Akashi Brotherhood. These ultimate martial artists have come to a union of mind and body that makes Kung Fu look like Kung Po Chicken. If you think you can walk that sheet of rice paper without causing a wrinkle, this is the place.

The Celestial Chorus bases their power around religion. Compared to the other groups, they're a little staid. But they incorporate their religious beliefs into their magick system in a way that will have you wishing your old Sunday School classes were this interesting.

It wouldn't be a White Wolf game without a good dose of sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll. This time, the slack of being slackers is taken up by the Cult of Ecstasy. These guys break all the rules — including the laws of physics.

If you want to get primitive, then the Dreamspeakers are for you. The mages voted "most likely to wear a bone through their nose," Dreamspeakers do the drum-beating spirit-animal riff. Shamans and spirit walkers fill the ranks of the group.

The Hollow Ones are like a whole organization full of that one person in your high school class who was always dressed in black. You know, the one who didn't go out for anything because "we're all just going to die anyway"? Every school has one. In my school, it was me. I got over it, but these guys didn't.

If you've been waiting for the kind of magick user that you see in other games, look for them in the Order of Hermes. This scholarly group of magical researchers intrigued me right from the start. The idea of studying magick as if it were a science is enormously appealing. If these guys were real, I'd sign up straight away.

Two of the groups are heavily into technology. The Sons of Ether play the role of Frankenstein-style mad scientists, while the Virtual Adepts use high-speed computers and VR gear to accomplish their tasks. This technomagick group probably won't satisfy those who really want a cyberhacker sort of game, but their hardware wizardry does lend considerable freshness to the possible scenarios.

If the Hermetic Order encompasses the scholarly wizards, then the Verbena holds the traditional witches. Not 'witch' in its current wide use, but 'witch' as in pointy hats and black cats. They've got some nice little nature spirit aspects, but it's wrapped up with some pretty horrific rites. These are scary folks.

The final group is called Euthantos. These are similar to the Hollow Ones in their "everything ends in death" attitude. Except

these guys seem to be in a real hurry to try this death thing out for themselves, and they don't care who they take with them.

All these orders of magickal folks provide a wide backdrop for games within *Mage*, and they're just the beginning.

If I haven't pointed it out by now, White Wolf has the best written manuals in the business. They might not be so choked with statistics as die-hard dungeoneers would like, but *Mage: The Ascension*, like White Wolf's earlier books, is a wonderfully readable text. Ever read a game manual just for the fun of reading it? Give this one a try.

The secret behind the success of White Wolf is undoubtedly tied to the rise in interest about vampires, magick, and all things New Age. But an equal part of their rise must be based on how *real* many of their characters and situations seem. The emphasis in *Mage*, as in previous White Wolf games, is on story. To tell a good story, you need good characters, not walking sets of hit dice.

Where White Wolf differs from other systems is the degree to which the game system insists on character richness and background. You can't play *Mage* without being on intimate terms with your character. The story *is* the game.

For myself, *Mage* is the best role-playing system I've encountered in some time. If you were left unimpressed by the dark machinations of *Vampire*, or have tired of more traditional rpgs, give this game a try.

Dealing with Magickal Life

I collect tarot cards. Understand, I don't believe in them. I have no illusion that any of these things can tell me the slightest thing about my life. I collect the cards because they're interesting, they have a history, and they quite often have some great art work.

My latest deck comes from White Wolf. It's a tarot deck designed to accompany their new *Mage: The Ascension* magical role-playing system. Those who are expecting traditional tarot, be forewarned — White Wolf has made significant modifications. Suits have been eliminated, or renamed, to tighten the relationship between the deck and the various magickal societies in *Mage*. If you're picking this up expecting to find a nine of wands, or three of cups, you are going to be disappointed.

Like all White Wolf products, the production values for the cards and their case are quite high. On the art front, it's going to depend upon your taste. The images on these cards reflect the dark, angular style often featured in White Wolf's manuals and supporting material.

What makes this deck more than worth it is its close ties with *Mage*. While I might not buy a deck for myself, it seems like a very reasonable purchase for my *Mage* character. If you're thinking of taking part in this spiff new role-playing experience, then consider this tarot deck as a unique accessory. ❧

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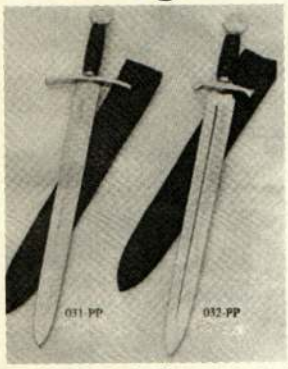
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SHINING

Continued from page 47

She smiles. "I know everybody."

I want to keep her talking. I want to put off the moment for as long as I can, so every time she finishes speaking, I try to fill the silence with another question.

"How do you decide when it's someone's time?" I ask.

"I told you," she says. "I don't choose when or how you die. I'm only there to meet you when you do."

"Do people get mad at you, or are they mostly just scared like me?"

The eldest fate shook her head. "Neither. Mostly they're too concerned with those they left behind to be angry or frightened. That old homily is true, you know: it's always harder for those left behind."

"So ... so my family wasn't mad at me because I didn't die with them? And my grandparents"

"How could they be? They loved you as much as you loved them."

"So I don't have to be scared of meeting them in ... wherever it is I'll be going?"

"I don't know where you'll go or who you'll meet when you're there," the eldest fate says. "And I don't know what they'll say to you. But I don't think you have to be scared."

I take a deep breath. "Okay," I tell her, wondering as I'm saying it where I've found the courage. "I'm guess I'm ready."

I wonder how it'll happen. Maybe I'll be lucky. Maybe I'll be one of the ones who just drifts away in her sleep.

"I'm not here to take you," the eldest fate tells me.

I don't even have time to feel relief, I'm so confused. "But ... then why are you here?"

"I came as a friend — to finish our earlier conversation."

"As a friend?"

"You know, returning a kindness," she says."

"But"

"I'm everybody's friend," the eldest fate explains. "Most people just don't know it."

I think of what Bones told me. I think about what I can't let go of, how I'm always so afraid, how I'm too scared to get close to someone because I know they're just going to die on me, how most of the time I feel so lost and alone. I think about how sick I am of the way I've lived my life, how I want to change it, but I can't seem to do it. Not on my own. I think about all of this. I look in the eldest fate's eyes and I see she understands.

I'm not going to live forever. I know that. I don't expect that. I don't even really want it. All I've ever wanted is the chance to be normal, to have a piece of what everybody else seems to have: a respite from the hurt and pain. I don't have to die to find that.

"I could use a friend," I tell her.

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BOOKS

Continued from page 16

in the middle of and which we all so easily take for granted: namely a world almost overflowing with ridiculously poor people and almost entirely lacking in ridiculously rich people.

I don't know if Lortz is ridiculously rich, but he certainly seems to have the number of those who are and the lead character of *Bereavements*, the spoiled and profoundly theatrical Mrs. Harrington-Smith Evans, is decidedly one of his best and most insightful creations in that category.

When we meet her she is—and for some 11 years has been—in a deep and highly visible state of mourning because of the death of her beautiful and beloved young son, Jamie. Going about heavily and perpetually veiled and flamboyantly dressed in black, she has shown considerable imagination and spent vast amounts of money in attempts to assuage her grief, but all without success.

First flash-frozen, Jamie's body, looking eerily alive and healthy, now floats in honey in a seamless coffin of crystal glass from which all but one tiny bubble of air has been excluded. The coffin, in turn, rests in a lovely little marble tomb inspired by an expensive architect's visit (financed by the grieving mother) to the Taj Mahal. The tomb itself is tastefully situated in a flawlessly landscaped nook of Mrs. Harrington-Smith Evans' Long Island estate.

Unfortunately, none of this frippery has helped Mrs. Harrington-Smith Evans at all, nor have visits to mediums, nor anything else she has tried, until she hits upon the bizarre notion of placing the following pathetic ad in *The Village Voice:*

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In time three would-be surrogate sons are chosen from the sometimes grotesquely inappropriate responses produced by the sad little notice: Martin, a handsome and worldly young actor; Bruno, a physically-challenged and touchingly naive young author; and Angel, a kid from the Barrio with a sensationally dysfunctional family. Angel's communication is by far the most touching of the three:

Dear Mother. I seen what you wrot. I'm lost. Please fine me. Youre loving son. Angel.

An increasingly weird and eventually dangerous dance begins between them and Mrs. Harrington-Smith Evans and, more and more it seems to be, the dead young Jamie, himself.

Bereavements is excellent modern gothic which moves from dark to darker but never loses compassions for its lost and wandering characters. Again, I am delighted Richard Lortz's work is being given a new outlet. I hope the response is sufficiently strong to encourage White Wolf to bring out more of his novels. ❧

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FOLKROOTS

Continued from page 29

on Disney films, it is that a poor but beautiful girl grows up to marry a wealthy "prince." Yet the knight-on-the-white-charger who swoops into our lives and relieves us of the need to determine our own fate is a creature of modern Hollywood films, not of traditional folktales. What has the prostitute heroine of *Pretty Woman* done to win her prince or transform her life? Precisely nothing — except to be beautiful, and in the right place at the right time.

That's no fairy tale. The old tales, as Gertrude Mueller Nelson has succinctly expressed it (in her Jungian study, "Here All Dwell Free") are about "anguish and darkness." They plunge heroines and heroes into the dark wood, into danger and despair and enchantment and deception, and only then offer them the tools to save themselves — tools that must be used wisely and well. (Used foolishly, or ruthlessly, they turn back on the wielder.) The power in fairy tales lies in such self-determined acts of transformation. Happy endings, where they exist, are hard won, and at a price. Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* is a better example of a fairy tale than Hollywood's *Pretty Woman*. Combining elements of *Cinderella, Beauty and the Beast,* and other tales, Jane is a classic folklore heroine: good-hearted, yes; but also clever, resourceful, and determined.

In modern parlance, the term "fairy tale" is sometimes used to refer to a lie or fanciful untruth. This describes the modern Cinderellas: the Disney film, and *Pretty Woman,* and umpteen hundred mass market retellings; they lie to us by reducing our dreams to simplistic formulas that empower no one, neither those who wait for Happily Ever After to arrive on the back of a shining white horse, or those who seek it in a pretty face. By contrast, the oldest Ash Girl tales use simple language to tell stories that are not really simple at all. They go to the very heart of truth. They've spoken the truth for a thousand years.

For further reading on the Cinderella tale, you might take a look at the following: *From the Beast to the Blonde* by Marina Warner; *Cinderella: A Casebook* edited by Alan Dundes; *Touch Magic* by Jane Yolen; "Grimm's Women" by P.L. Travers in *The New York Times* Book Review (Fall 1975); *Womenfolk and Fairy Tales* by Rosemary Minard; *Down the Rabbit Hole* by Selma G. Lanes; *Don't Tell the Grown-Ups* by Alison Lurie; *Don't Bet on the Prince* edited by Jack Zipes; *The Uses of Enchantment* by Bruno Bettelheim; *Problems of the Feminine in Fairy Tales* by Marie-Louise von Franz; *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders* by Angela Carter; *Red as Blood, or Tales from the Sisters Grimmer* by Tanith Lee; *Three Princesses* (containing Cinderella illustrations compiled from turn-of-the-century editions) edited by Cooper Edens. ❧

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MOVIES

Continued from page 21

become clichés," Garris notes, "because they work. The last thing I want is the sudden jump of a cat out of the trash can. 'Oh my God, it's just a cat!' We kind of played with that in *Sleepwalkers*. I wanted to make a movie that was scary, and King wrote a *really* scary script, and I think what Kubrick did with his film was intentionally break all the rules. And, to me, although it made a wonderful film, it's not a particularly frightening film. It is a very unique film, and there are a lot of great things about it, but for me, at least, and I'm probably older than you, when it came out, it was the movie I most anticipated, probably in my life up until then. And when I saw it, I was so disappointed that it wasn't the book. For me, it wasn't scary. That's with all respect to Kubrick, who is one of the cinema gods."

It's a well-known phenomenon that many film adaptations based on Stephen King's books and stories end up being disappointments. Garris contends that the simple reason for that is lack of respect on the part of the filmmakers. "I think if you treat [King's work] with respect, you get *The Dead Zone*, or *Misery*, or *Carrie*, *Stand by Me*, *Dolores Claiborne*, and *The Shawshank Redemption*. There are a bunch of great Stephen King adaptations, and gee, they're the ones that most resemble his work. Isn't that a coincidence?

"It's hard to say if it's directors, producers, or studios or money men or what — I don't think anyone sets out to make a bad movie. You'd be foolish to do that. But to me, what makes Stephen King's material work is how deep the characters are, and how human they are, and how we all live next door to a potential Stephen King story. And the ones that don't work are the ones that think Stephen King is all about a jack-in-the-box popping out of the closet to go 'Boo!' every ten minutes."

The Shining, budgeted at $20 million, shot for 14 weeks at various locations near the Colorado Rockies. Weather proved to be the most daunting obstacle to the production, Garris notes. "Well, you have to rely on snow — big snow sequences — because they are stuck in the Rockies. That was a big problem. We spent a lot more money creating snow than we expected, and it really screwed up our schedule. We had a lot of problems, or let's say *challenges*, because everything worked out great and it was a fun shoot; everything went well in most respects, but weather was a problem. Having a minor who has a huge part in the show made scheduling difficulties, because you can't work a minor more than five hours, and that's after he's nine years old. The first month or so, he was only eight, so he could only work four hours a day. I guess those were the two biggest challenges."

Another challenge the miniseries and its director faces are the inevitable comparisons to the first version, and to Stanley Kubrick. Garris is philosophical about it all, however. "Quite honestly, I expect to get my ass kicked. I think most reviewers in the mainstream press have already written their reviews. I've been through it before with *Psycho IV*. As I said before, Kubrick is one of the gods of cinema, and I'm a guy who is doing the best work I can. I hope it's good and I hope it's respectful and all, but nobody knows me, and I have never made *A Clockwork Orange* and *Lolita* and all those great films. I have more to prove. But it's Jack Nicholson and Stanley Kubrick versus Steven Weber and Mick Garris. I think the [miniseries] is really going to be terrific, but some people, I think, are not going to see beyond the name value. But I hope they do."

A gallery of ghosts, with make-up effects by SFX's Bill Corso, gather in the ballroom.



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Contributors

Terry Brooks is one of the great publishing success stories, for his first novel, *The Sword of Shannara* , was rescued from the slush pile by editor Lester del Rey and went on to become a best seller after its publication in 1977. Six more titles followed in that series, the most recent being *The Talismans of Shannara* in 1993. His other popular solves are in the Landover series, including *Wizard at Large* and *The Tangle Box*. Prior to becoming a full time writer, he spent almost two decades as a partner in the law firm of Besse, Frue, Arnold, Brooks and Miller.

Susan J. Kroupa has lived on both the Hopi and the Navajo reservations. Her story "The Healer," which shares a similar world with Scapegoat," won first place in one of the quarterly Writer's of the Future contests and was recently reprinted in the anthology *Vision Quests*. She has a degree in music and has worked as a music reviewer, columnist, and freelance journalist. She is the mother of seven children, and currently resides in Orem, Utah, where she is completing a historical/fantasy novel set in Hopi culture.

One of **Don Webb**'s greatest pleasures is that he has recently had work translated into Chinese. Look for Don's most recent books, *A Spell for the Fulfillment of Desire* from Black Ice, *Seven Faces of Darkness: Practical Typhonian Magic*, from Runa-Raven. Don is not now at, nor has he ever attended, a communist party (although he once slow-danced with a woman named Olga). He lives with his sexy wife Rosemary in Austin, Texas. His Web page is at http://www.fringeware.com/taz-media/dwebb. **Annie Lunsford** has been freelancing since 1976. She won't reveal her age, only that she was "born after swing and before rock-and-roll. She has had illustrations in *Science Fiction Age* and *Realms of Fantasy*.

Charles de Lint is a full-time musician and writer who lives in Ottawa, Canada, with his wife MaryAnn Harris, an artist and musician. He is the author of numerous books including *Moonheart, Dreams Underfoot* and the forthcoming novel *Trader*. For more information, look for him on the world wide web at http://www.cyberus.ca/~cdl.

Terri Windling is a writer and painter who has worked extensively with myth and fairy tale themes. She is also a five-time winner of the World Fantasy Award for her editorial work, which includes the annual *Year's Best Fantasy & Horror* collection (co-edited with Ellen Datlow, St. Martin's Press) and many other anthologies and book series. She divides her time between homes in Devon, England and in Tucson, Arizona.



Susan J. Kroupa



Geoffrey Landis

Geoffrey Landis's story "The Kingdom of Cats and Birds," first published in *Science Fiction Age*, was recently reprinted in Terri Windling and Ellen Datlow's *Year's Best FAntasy and Horror* anthology. He won the Hugo Award for best short story in 1992 for the story "A Walk in the Sun," and the Nebula in 1990 for "Ripples in the Dirac Sea." He lives in Cleveland and is down to just one calico cat but his goldfish have multiplied way beyond the number you would think possible. In addition to writing, Dr. Landis works on solar energy research at NASA Lewis Research Center. His current project is to develop instruments to fly on an upcoming unmanned probe to Mars.

William F. Wu's recent fantasy short fiction includes "On the Sun and Moon Mountain" in *Ancient Enchantresses* and "The Ginseng Potion" in *Warrior Enchantresses*, anthologies edited by Kathleen M. Massie-Ferch, and "The Spirit From the Ninth Heaven," in *Phantoms of the Night*, edited by Martin H. Greenberg.

One of Wu's ancestor's lived in the San Francisco Chinatown in the late 1800s, but departed prior to the big quake of 1906. Also descended from the Munro Clan of the Scottish Highlands, Wu decided to write this haunted house story combining his disparate ancestries; however, his relations got along much better than the characters in this issue's story. Wu lives in the Mojave Desert north of Los Angeles. **Web Bryant**'s artistic skills cross many disciplines in commercial art. He was part of the design team that created *USA Today*. Other achievements: art directing the first national children's newspaper, *Pennywhistle Press*; creating national award-winning maps and graphics; and being commissioned to paint portraits of a Supreme Court justice and corporate CEOs.

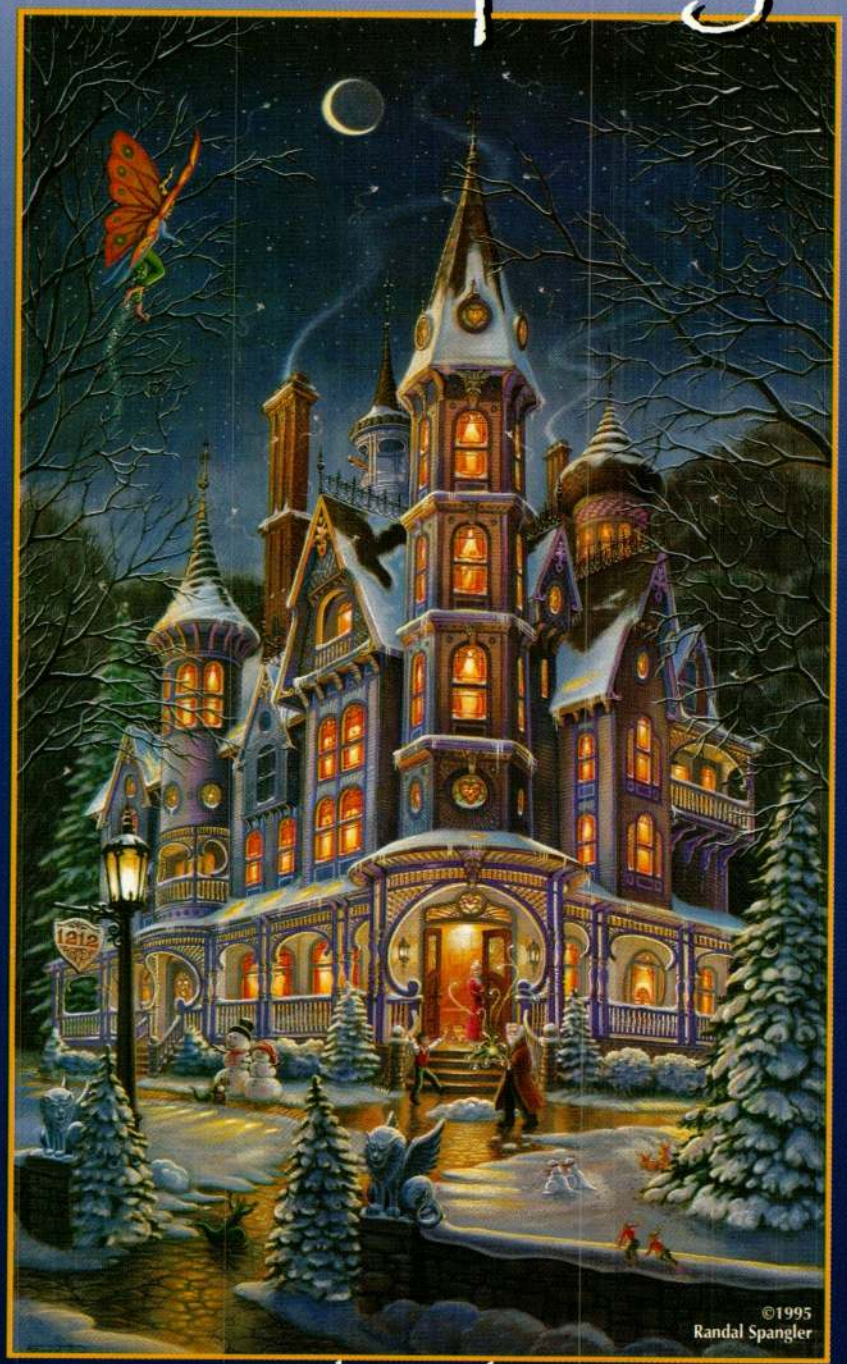


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